

# **David's Story**

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## INTRODUCTION

My life's history encompasses also the excesses of antisemitism in Germany, of which I have been an eyewitness.

The Germans were told, for years, in an unrelenting defamation campaign, that the Jews were an inferior race which had to be exterminated like vermin. With this untruthful propaganda, the National Socialists opened up the way for the persecution of the Jews. With the persecution and annihilation of millions of defenseless human beings, who had not done any harm to any German, the National Socialists set themselves an eternal memorial in the history of the twentieth century.

My experiences during this time are meant to offer the young German generation an opportunity to realize the truth about these dreadful events. I feel obligated to give an account of this, since I had the rare fortune to survive these times in one of the most feared concentration camps.

Even though forty years have passed since then, I cannot forget the eighteen months which I spent in German camps. They were horrible.

David Adler

## The Textile Merchant in Leipzig

"Return in good health, my boy", said my father at the train station in Lezajsk, as he gave me another fifty crowns pocket money and seated me in the train to Leipzig. He believed I was going to return when the school vacation had ended, and would continue my studies at the Gymnasium of Lezajsk, so that, later on, I would become a competent attorney. But I, a boy barely sixteen years old, had different ideas, and I did not disclose to my father that I intended to do everything in order to stay in Leipzig.

"I want to become a merchant in Germany" is what I was thinking, as the train started to roll. That was my life's goal. Who would have thought, then, that after Leipzig, Auschwitz was to come, then Trelleborg/Sweden, Nice (Nizza) and Frankfurt/Main. No-one could have imagined what this twentieth century had in store for Europe. Nobody would have thought that the first catastrophe would begin only weeks later.

I was forgetting, in my joyous expectations for the future, what I left behind: Siedlanka, a health resort surrounded by forests; our beautiful house, once belonging to Count Potocki, our estate with horses and cows, the large fruit tree garden and lilac bushes near the town of Lezajsk; mother and sister Golde, who ran our grocery store, the father who occupied himself with the restaurant and agricultural matters, my two younger brothers and our grandfather. We were thriving. As Jews, we had more freedom in this Polish region of the Austrian Monarchy than Jews were granted anywhere else in Eastern Europe. The German language was obligatory as foreign language in this country's schools, and we spoke German also at home, in addition to Polish. Indeed, the Poles considered the Jews there more as Germans than as compatriots. We were indeed the pillars of "Germandom" in Austria's Polish region.

But I wanted to leave this "outskirt of the world", wanted to see the world, which, to me, was represented by Germany. My grandfather had awakened in me the desire to see the supposedly "Promised Land". He had spent quite a large part of his life there, and believed, recounting his own experience, that I could become a big success if I obtained a solid education in Germany.

To me, the merchant's trade seemed more desirable than that of a lawyer. Therefore, I had saved every penny of my allowance in order to be able to quite the Gymnasium and to go to Germany.

A lucky coincidence had, totally unexpected, now opened up the way. During the summer of 1914, my cousin, who lived in Leipzig, had paid my parents a visit, had stayed several days in my parent's house, and had, in total innocence, invited me to visit him when I was on vacation. That, to me, was like a sign from Heaven, and I counted the days and weeks until vacation time. I was thinking secretly that, once in Leipzig, I would find myself a job and would not return home. I did not anticipate any problems.

The train arrived, after a long journey, at six o'clock in the morning at the largest and most modern train station in Europe. Nobody was there to pick me up, because my cousin had not been informed of my arrival. A horse-drawn carriage took me to the address which he had given me during his visit in Siedlanka. When I arrived there, I realized that I stood in front of his business establishment, and not his apartment. I rang the bell, and the custodian appeared, giving me my cousin's address. But I was so tired from the long trip, that I sat down in the hallway of this commercial building and took a short nap. My cousin's brother-in-law awakened me an hour later and saw to it that I was transferred to my relatives' apartment.

My cousin was pleasantly surprised by my visit, and wanted me to go to bed, first of all, and get a good rest. But I was so excited in these new surroundings that I refused to waste any time by sleeping. So, we ate breakfast together and then left for his business. On the way there, my cousin asked me how long I intended to stay in Leipzig. "All my life!" was my answer. That surprised my cousin, and he realized immediately what he had gotten himself into with his invitation. I should return to my parents house, to finish school, perhaps go to college, he advised me, and then return to Leipzig. But his advice fell on deaf ears.

Determined to stay in Leipzig, I went for a walk through the city's business district right on my first day there. I noticed a very impressive men's apparel store with eight large shopwindows, which gave me the idea to apply for an apprentice position there. But first I wanted to ask my cousin for advice. His comment was astonishing and discouraging. He told me that the owners of that large apparel store were anti-semites; they did not employ any Jews.

Never before had I heard that the Germans were anti-Semites. To the contrary, I had always observed the Germans in my homeland to be friendly. Jewish children went to the school of the German settlement Gellershof, near Lezajsk. When we talked of antisemites, we were thinking only of the Slavic population. Later, however, it dawned on me that there was always a sort of salon-antisemitism. My cousin's comment that the owners of the large apparel store were anti-Semites did not stop me from seeking a position there. I did not even consider a return into my hometown. Of course I did not want to become a burden for my cousin, and would have accepted any other job offer, if needed be.

I continued the search for a position in the men's clothing business. I found another apparel store; it did not have eight shop windows like the first, but was just as impressive. Here, too, I studied the displays, then stood near the entrance and observed how the customers were treated. The owner must have noticed me, because he came out and asked whether I was interested in a particular piece of clothing. I answered that I had no intention to buy anything, but was looking for a job in the clothing business. He looked at me thoughtfully and asked me where I came from and what educational background I had. I gave him the information and noticed that he seemed to have a certain interest in me. He asked me to come in and assured me that he would like to hire me as a volunteer if business were better, but he would recommend me to a business acquaintance who might be able to use me. He then went into his office to make a telephone call. The conversation satisfied him; his acquaintance was coming over. Soon a taxi arrived from which emerged a ca. fifty year old, elegantly dressed gentlemen. After I had been introduced to him, he asked me if I had anyone in Leipzig who would be entitled to conclude an employment contract for me. I named my cousin, who maintained a silk wholesale enterprise. We went to see him.

My cousin was quite surprised when I told him of my intention, and when he heard that I was offered 30 Marks per month as a volunteer, he refused to sign the employment contract, since no one could live on such a low income. But I did not want to give up this opportunity, and wrote my father to use his influence on my cousin so that he would sign the contract. My father replied that he would send me an additional 30 Marks, if I absolutely wanted the position in the clothing store. Now my cousin was finally agreeable and concluded the contract for me. My burning desire came true on August 1, 1914. I began my apprenticeship as textile merchant. World War I broke out on the same day.

My master's store employed four salesmen, one apprentice and a cashier lady. They were asked to speak with me often, to further improve my already good German. They were all Christians, only the boss and I were of Jewish descent. The customers were not supposed to know my background, therefore my name was changed from David to Fritz. Otherwise, my background presented no disadvantage, neither in the trade school nor in the business. My enthusiasm for the profession left no room for problems.

I soon advanced, due to the special circumstances: two salesmen were drafted into the military, new personnel was not to be found, since everybody was eager to join the war effort. The boss, therefore, soon promoted me and the older apprentice as assistant salesmen. I used the opportunity and soon earned most of the premiums which were given for the sale of unpopular items. I urgently needed these additional earnings, since my father's support had ceased when my homeland was occupied by the Russians. I considered it hopeless to ask my boss for a raise, in view of the agreed-upon apprentice contract.

I was trying to think of how to increase my income. When I noticed that we had neither neckties nor suspenders in our collection, items which were frequently demanded by our customers, I asked the boss to permit me to supply these articles myself, and to offer them to the customers. He would have no disadvantage by adding these items, but rather the advantage that, if a customer purchased these, he would probably also be interested in other items in the store.

The boss was able to see that a self-supporting volunteer could not live on thirty Marks a month, and that such a competent person as I should be rewarded for his efforts. Thus, I bought neckties and suspenders, decorated a theretofore unused showcase, and enriched the firm's selection. I offered the other two salesmen and the apprentice half of my earnings if they were selling my items. The venture was successful. Within a short time, my own business was more profitable than the no longer received financial support from my father.

The boss did all the purchasing, and he was regarded generally as a good expert in the clothing business. He usually spent the mornings in the firm; the afternoons were spent in the "Cafe Gruner Baum" where he played cards with business friends. Now and then he would call the store to inquire if there was anything new.

Once he was told on the phone by the cashier that business was as normal, only one customer could not be satisfied since he could not find what he desired. The boss asked: "Was Fritz not there?" It had become customary to have me take over when a sale did not go smoothly.

My professional progress had soon reached its first climax. This was also a disadvantage, in a way, since the boss did no longer give me a bonus at Christmas time, with the remark that I had attained a sort of independent status in his firm. His position was not altogether unreasonable, since my income had come close to that of a good salesman.

The first blow came just as I was so totally satisfied with my profession: draft into the Austrian-Hungarian army! My boss wrote me a good recommendation and believed I would return to him if I survived the war in good enough shape. He invited me to a farewell dinner in his home on the eve before my departure, and asked me to write now and then. He wished me "Good Luck in the fight against the enemies of the German Empire."

With the draft orders in my pocket, I returned to the place of my birth, Siedlanka. Two weeks remained, which I spend with my parents who were so very happy to see me again. But again, I had to say Good Bye. I reported to my regiment in Jaroslaw, where only one checkpoint remained, since the regiment had been transferred to Jicin in Bohemia as the Russians approached. I was given my uniform and marching papers to Jicin. The military training was short. I arrived shortly thereafter at the Italian battle front, where I was wounded during one of our attacks. I was transported to a military hospital located in the vinyards of Prague. Fortunately, my wound turned out not to be serious, so that I was transferred, after some time of treatment, to a convalescence home in Jicin. There, I expected to receive a statement by a physician which would have freed me from serving in the frontlines.

On the evening of my birthday, I was sharing dinner with a pretty girl in a good restaurant. The same table was already occupied by by one of my regiment's officers. He addressed me, as he heard me speaking German so fluently and clearly. What company I belonged to, he wanted to know. Presently I am in a convalescence home, where I expect an exemption from military service. Which trade did I practice before having been drafted? Sales consultant in the clothing business! Whether I would consider myself capable to do some light work in his office? I explained that my educational background should be sufficient.

The young officer, attorney by profession, was our regiment's military judge; he delivered deserters to the criminal court and punished lesser offenders himself. He promised me to request my transfer to his office. A few days later I got the order to report to his chancellery. I enjoyed the work there because it was a meaningful occupation. We were always quite busy, since the army was battle-fatigued and cases of desertion were increasing.

One morning we observed through the chancellery window that the troops were returning from their training ground already at ten o'clock, which was unusual. Our mailman brought the news: the Czechs had torn themselves loose from the Hapsburg monarchy! The soldiers received these news with exultation.

A militarily organized Czech militia was immediately formed, which demanded from our regiment's commander that the weapons would be turned over to them. The army offered no resistance, but before the weapons were delivered, the soldiers pillaged the provisions depot and the clothing depot, and then they were on their way to the train station. They literally fought over a place in the freight train wagons; to make sure they got away quickly, some of the returning soldiers climbed onto the wagons' roofs, others seated themselves on the boarding steps. I was one of these who spent a number of days to return home. Siedlanka now belonged to the newly formed Polish state. Their government mobilized the returning soldiers again, so that they could liberate the Polish regions which were occupied by the Bolsheviks. I could, therefore, forget the idea of having a period of recuperation after the war's hardships. On the other hand, I did not want to go to war again, in view of the fact that my sympathies were still with Austria. That meant another "Good Bye" to Siedlanka. Still in the possession of my old Austrian passport, I was able to return to Germany.

Second stage, Leipzig. I did not want to return to my previous employer in the clothing business. I wanted to adjust to the changed economic conditions and preferred to work independently. I accepted the position of sales representative for a wellknown lingerie manufacturer. It was my goal to win many customers, so that I could be independent. My region of activity was Leipzig and the surrounding area. This was advantageous since it kept travel expenses low. I used all my energy to achieve a high turnover.

My Jewish colleagues already warned me at that time that a dangerous Jew-hatred was spreading in Germany. I did not notice this at first, but later even I could not ignore this development. When the time of inflation had past, I quit my sales rep position and opened my own business as planned, by starting a linen mail order business. This newly founded establishment soon took off, surpassing all my expectations. My success was in part due to a private bank, which had granted me large credits. The new, stable Rentenmark currency, as I soon found out, started a boom in the German economy, which lasted into mid-1929. The closing of the Darmstaedter Nationalbank due to large financial losses signaled a turnaround, because the faith in the German economy had suffered a serious setback. In addition, a recovery was hampered by Germany's political instability.

The receding boom in Germany was intensified by unemployment. The already widespread antisemitism was revived. The German population was told again and again that the lost war and the unemployment miseries were the fault of the Jews. The National Socialists had fabricated the thesis that the Jews were responsible for Germany's national misfortune. Hitler's National Socialist movement were supported for a revenge-war. Rearmament was secretly set into motion with the help of heavy industry money, even before Hitler came officially into power. With the financial support of heavy industry, he founded an antisemitic movement. The propagated hatred against the Jews in Germany was developing into a life-threatening situation.

Employees of Jewish firms were waiting eagerly for the moment when they could take over the business. Jewish business owners were sometimes threatened by their employees, when they were reminded of their duties. Contrary to those happenings, I must confirm that all my own employees turned out to be loyal and honest. One of them, a member of the Marine-SS, was my most loyal worker. Such lucky individual cases, however, could not change the general development. The antisemitism in Germany spread like wildfire.

It must have been in the year 1925 or 1926 when I entered, one day, a restaurant named Merzdorf in the village of Ganzig near Leipzig, where just then the village council was in session. I chose to take a table to one side, in order not to disturb the discussion, and could not help overhearing a talk given by the chairman of the local consumer association, an elementary school teacher. He talked about the Jews' influence on the German economy. His point was to eliminate the Jews from the business cycle, since the barely two percent Jews in trade and industry had assumed the role of dominating the Germans economically. I acted as if all that did not concern me.

The village manager ordered a round of beer for the meeting participants. He asked the restaurant owner not to forget the guest at the side table. "But he is a Jew", the hostess whispered, who knew me. The manager glanced over to the table, then asked the hostess to put a beer on this table nevertheless. We started talking. A member of the community commented that the Jews he was acquainted with were decent and honest persons. "Even the Jews who you do not know are decent and honest!" I called out to him. But the teacher insisted on his opinion that the Jews were spoiling...(end of page).

When Hitler came to power in 1933, public "enlightenment" campaigns against the Jews were conducted in all cities and villages. The "Stuermer", the agitating newspaper, spread the wildest anti-jewish rumors. The barely two percent Jewish population was accused to be responsible for the demise of the German economy and the unemployment. The Jews were held responsible, generally, for everything that went wrong for the National Socialists.

Sometimes German voices were heard: "The Fuehrer is not aware of any of this!" There were Germans who could not imagine that Hitler would condone such slander. Only after his book "Mein Kampf" became popular did a large portion of the German population believe that the Jews were to blame for the existing mismanaged economy, which prevailed after Hitler's ascension to power. Antisemitism became fashionable. A German patriot had to also be an enemy of the Jews.

As a consequence of the race law publications, the Jews lost their civil rights. They were dismissed, without notice, from commercial and industrial enterprises, and from civil service jobs. Jewish physicians and attorneys were usually no longer allowed to continue practicing. Only in the economic sector did Hitler show some restraint, because he wanted to avoid the spreading of the boycotts which had been announced abroad against Germany. Besides that, Dr. Schacht, National Bank President, had threatened to resign if the National Socialists decide to interfere with the economy.

Dr. Goebbels, Secretary of Propaganda, even surpassed his teacher Hitler in his hatred of the Jews. The boycott of Jewish businesses he ordered on April 1, 1933, will remain unforgettable. Many Jews closed their firms on that day; excepted from the boycott were foreign citizens. As a foreigner, I neither wanted to close my firm nor tolerate a guardsman in front of my store. As I approached my store on the above-mentioned day, I saw an SA-man standing before the entrance, and I explained to him that this store belonged to a foreigner, upon which he retreated immediately. Barely an hour later, one of the sales ladies came to me, all upset, and reported that a SA-man was in front of the door and did not want to let her in. I went outside and saw indeed a brutal-looking character in SA-uniform. I repeated my explanation regarding the foreign ownership. He stated that he did not speak with Jews. Consequently I hurried to the boycott administration office, identified myself as a foreigner, and asked for assistance. The Manager called immediately my office, and asked that the SA-man come to the telephone. He conveyed the message through my secretary that he would not enter into a Jewish store.

The manager, in turn, gave him the message to retreat immediately, otherwise he would be taken into custody. Only after hearing this threat did the SA-man leave his post.

I noticed several sales representatives in the park where the mansion, in which the action headquarters were housed, was located. They were supposed to report Jewish enterprises where no guard had as yet been posted. I recognized among them the representative of several weaving mills, who, for many years, had received my largest orders. Several days later he resumed his business visits with me, but did not receive an order. I boycotted him. He never knew the reason for my boycott. I only felt sorry for his delivery people who, because of their reps' anti-Jewish position, had to suffer large profit losses. They could not know that I had given him preference when issuing orders; and that his wife had always sent me a home-made Christmas cake at holiday time, out of gratitude. One of my employees told me that he saw that this representative, also known by him, had placed the brutal SA-man in front of my business entrance. Much later, when the Nazi spook was over, I would again cross the path of this representative.

During the years following 1936, a considerable textile shortage was being felt; officials and party functionaries did no longer ask whether a business was Arian or Jewish. Not until two criminal justice officials in Leipzig were reported by one of their colleagues because they had purchased lingerie in my store, did the NS-party take action and gave them a warning. I refused to take back the merchandise. I did not believe the customers' explanation that they were not allowed to buy anything in a Jewish store. I requested relevant information from the NSDAP county administration in Leipzig. They told me that they principally do not meddle in business matters. This unequivocal information prompted me to ask my customers to pick up the returned goods and to pay up. A few days later one of the customers called, identified himself as criminal inspector Loewe, and asked for the name and private residence address of the store owner. I interceded and asked him for the reason of his question. So I can file a complaint against you, because you refused to accept the return of the lingerie.

I advised the man to contact the residence registration bureau, where he was able to obtain the requested information. The complaint, however, could only be heard by a regular court. He would not get anywhere with a legal complaint, since no illegal action had taken place.

Several days later I was subpoenaed to appear at the criminal investigation department. One of the officials asked me if I would be willing to take back the merchandise, and forget about the matter. I assured him that I would have accepted the goods without question, if the buyer had not stated that he was not permitted to make purchases from Jews. As a businessman, I was interested in knowing whether such a law existed. The official assured me that this law was in force. He could not tell me when this law was passed, and published. I asked him to give me this information in writing. He said he had no authority to do that. He would present this case to his superiors, and they would decide what would be the appropriate action. I was able to observe that Kriminalkommissar Loewe, decorated with NS medals, sat in the background during this discussion. Two weeks later, the wives of the two customers came into my store and explained to the sales lady that the Polizeipraesident (head of police dept.) Knoke had personally decided that they should pick up the merchandise and pay for it. In the future, they should ascertain beforehand whether they enter an Arian or Jewish store; if they were deceived, the seller would be culpable.

Following this decision, I was able to conduct my business uninterrupted for a long time. This was partially due to the fact that my firm had a very good reputation with bureaucrats. The Polizeipraesident who belonged to the "Stahlhelm" (steel helmet) organization, had the full confidence of the Jews. They knew they could depend on it that his decisions were based on the law, and that he did not tolerate arbitrary measures.

During this time, I was approached repeatedly by Arian businessmen who were interested in acquiring my business, which had a large clientele. They made me tempting offers, but I refused steadfastly, since I did not intend to make heirs out of my enemies. When all pressures that were put upon me proved in vain, the Gestapo (=Geheime Staatspolizei = secret service) entered the picture.

One day I received a phone call from the Gewerkschaft Deutscher Angestellter (German Employees Union) to announce the visit of two gentlemen, who wanted to discuss personnel issues with the business owner. I conveyed to them the message to please postpone their visit by one half hour, since I was in the middle of a conversation. Suddenly, my chief clerk appeared in my office, where I conducted a discussion with a weaving mill representative, called me aside and whispered: not the announced union people had come, but the Secret Police. I had the clerk ask them to please be patient for a few moments. "The Gestapo does not wait! they yelled at my clerk. "Where is your boss? My clerk, who had noticed that I had reacted somewhat unperturbed to the uninvited guests, called back via the house phone and asked me to come to the front of the store, since the Gestapo had been rough with him. I interrupted my conversation and went out to meet the Gestapomen. I asked them to identify themselves. They pulled out their ID cards and showed them to me. What was the purpose of their visit to my store? They wanted to speak with me privately. I lead the two into my office. Now, gentlemen, we are alone, what do you have to say to me? We are here to take a look at your customer file. I had the impression, that Kriminalkommissar Loewe had ordered them to do so? I refused them access to the customer file. I was aware that I entered quite a risk in opposing the Gestapo, but until now I had never avoided a fight for my rights. The Gestapomen had no doubts that I would let them see the file. After my refusal, they tried to gain access by threatening me. They threatened to use force if I continued to refuse to cooperate. I took the threat seriously and called two employees to serve as witnesses of this discussion. In their presence, I assured the two men that they did not have the right to control my customer file, only the Gewerbepolizei (trade police) was in charge of such an action. A telephone call to the Chamber of Commerce would confirm that. As I was starting to place a call to them, one of the men took the receiver out of my hand, and prevented me from calling the Chamber of Commerce. Why I was so upset? Their threat to use force had unnerved me. I had treated them very impolitely, they complained. Well, their rough behaviour had forced me to act that way, especially since I knew they had no right to examine my customer file. They had announced themselves as representatives of the GDA, and had turned out to be Secret Police men. They were asked to wait a few moments, since I was in the middle of a negotiation, and yelled at my clerk.

The Secret Police men now made the excuse that they had to use a pretense for their visit, because if they came right out by identifying themselves as Gestapo men, most persons would immediately disappear and avoid a meeting. They apologized to us and left my office.

Unimaginable the difficulties that might result for my customers if I let the Gestapo see the customer file. It included numerous prominent officials, one of them the province manager of Westphalia; but since the Gestapo was interested in my clients, the deliveries to him were made under the return address of my Arian shipment manager.

After the Race Laws were made public, Jews were no longer welcome in coffeehouses, theaters or concert halls. There even were restaurants which had a sign at the door "Jews and Dogs are not admitted." I saw a direction sign at one of the Autobahn exit ramps "This road does not lead to Palestine." Too bad that the Autobahn administration did not think of marking the way to Palestine, perhaps some of the German Jews would have escaped the gas chamber!

For a while, I was able to avoid the molestations to which a Jew was constantly exposed, by traveling frequently abroad. I spent almost every weekend in Czechoslovakia, where Jews were still well-liked. There I met sometimes Jews who had emigrated from Germany, and who were waiting for a visa across the Atlantic. I felt sorry for them, because they did no longer know where they belonged. It was those people's fate which prevented me to give up my residence in Germany. Also, I still believed at that time that the Jews would be granted a certain measure of freedom in Germany. I even had reason to assume that the Jews would be allowed to trade freely: a circular letter, which was sent to me, written by the Secretary for the Economy in Spring of 1938, declared that the export release for textiles from Austria was permitted, which gave me this impression.

Since cotton was becoming more and more scarce in the German Reich, and substituted were being introduced, I wanted to take advantage of the large supplies which were still available in Austria, and so I drove, together with a business friend, on the Munich-Salzburg Autobahn to Vienna. On the Ascension Sunday holiday, we made a sidetour to the Grossglockner mountain. We were surprised to see that, on the mountain-plateau, a SA-ski-meeting was taking place, sponsored by the Reich's Sport Leader von Tschammer and Osten. All ... parked there ... (end of pg.)

I took a picture, without realizing that the swastika flags were in a prominent place. This snapshot was going to get me in big trouble later on, because in France one assumed, using the photo as evidence, that I was a Nazi, which lead to my arrest.

In Vienna, we took rooms in the Grandhotel, where we had a friendly reception because of our Polish passports. Evidently we were regarded as Polish diplomats, since no Jew in Austria at that time was in the possession of an automobile.

Right next to our Hotel, arrived at the same time Reichsminister Dr. Goebbels with entourage at the Ringhotel. Thousands of Viennese brought him ovations. In the middle of all this commotion, we, too, were enthusiastically greeted as we arrived at the Grandhotel; no-one would have guessed that inside the car with the Leipzig license plate number III were two Jews.

We were put in touch with a local textile industry representative by the Chamber of Commerce. He lead us on the following day to a cotton products wholesale dealer, who had a large lingerie (linen) fabrics inventory. But we realized already during this first visit that the export release as announced by Mr. Funk in Vienna was not known by the wholesalers nor by the authorities. Evidently, we had come to Vienna too soon. Thereupon, my business friend returned to Leipzig, but I stayed in Vienna. The Chamber of Commerce rep then took me to a Jewish wholesale dealer, who still had a well-stacked inventory of woven fabrics. I was received by an administrator, appointed by the foreign currency agency. The business owner had entered a sanatorium because he feared to be sent to the KZ camp Sachsenhausen; his wife was still permitted to serve as consultant for the administrator. She was lucky: I noticed, in a busy Vienna street, Jewish man and women, equipped with brooms, sweeping the sidewalks under the supervision of SA-men. In the area of Jew-persecution the Austrian Nazis were ahead of their colleagues in the Old Reich.

I showed the administrator a letter written by the Secretary of the Economy and asked him for an offer. He revealed to me, in a confidential conversation, that the business was close to being taken over by Arians, and that the supplies had to be reserved for the successor. I explained to him that there was a big shortage on cotton fabrics in the Old Reich, which was the reason for the export release. The administrator then wanted proof that I was authorized to make purchases for the Leipzig firm. I identified myself as the owner of the Leipzig firm, and not its purchasing agent. The administrator was not aware that I was Jewish. He believed that, since the Secretary of the Economy had corresponded with the Leipzig firm, it had to be an Arian enterprise, and he exempted me from the sales restriction.

The textile prices in Austria were almost twenty percent lower than in the Old Reich. I purchased, therefore, pure linens, without added cellular fibers, in the amount of 100,000 Reichsmark. The invoice was paid for on the same day with a check by my bank in Leipzig. The Vienna shipping company Spedition Schenker & Co. was hired to ship the cotton fabrics to the Firma Adler & Co. in Leipzig. I purchased also 36,000 meter of unbleached linen and had it shipped for bleaching to the firm Keim in Hirtingen near Vienna. This invoice was also paid for immediately. The next evening, my Leipzig head clerk called me at the hotel and reported that the Leipzig Customs Search had blocked by bank account, and that the check I wrote in Vienna were not covered. One day earlier, my bank had given the suppliers the confirmation that these checks were in order. The NS-authorities in Vienna found out that the owner of the Firma Adler was a Jew. They ordered, therefore, that the Leipzig Customs Search clock my bank account, in order to also prevent the exportation of the paid-for fabrics. I returned immediately to Leipzig and filed a protest against the account blockage with the Foreign Exchange authority. Their director, Dr. Winkler, was also worried about the Customs Search action. In my presence he advised the official in charge of the illegality of his action, and ordered him to immediately remove the blockage. My bank account was released on the same day.

Upon my return to Vienna, I was confronted by a new surprise. The Spedition Schenker was prevented from shipping to Leipzig the fabrics stored with them by the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, who refused to allow the exportation. Evidently, all the Vienna authorities worked hand in hand in order to prevent that the linen fabrics arrived in my possession. Again I presented the letter written by the Secretary of the Economy to the Chamber of Commerce, and was informed that Austria made the export dependent on the condition that the fabrics were first processed in Austria.

A leading employee of the Spedition Schenker now gave me the advice how I could get my linens out of Vienna: a Augsburg long-distance shipping company was bringing furniture from Augsburg to Vienna twice a week, and returned empty. They could take along the stored fabrics on their return trip. The Augsburg shipping outfit agreed to pick up the stored fabrics at Schenker & Co. in Vienna and to deliver them directly to Leipzig. They actually picked up the materials and brought them to Leipzig. The shipping papers were even ... at the old border by the old customs authority ... (end of pg.)

The transport arrived two days later in Leipzig. Passers-by who observed the unloading of the fabrics at my store were happy to see that linens were going to be again available in Leipzig. Department stores called to find out whether I would sell the fabrics by the meter? I declined, since the fabrics were to be made into bedlinens. Presently, the retailers complained to the Chamber of Commerce that a Jewish merchant was able to import trucks loads of linens from Vienna while the Arian textile merchants were not able to get even one meter of material from their suppliers. This protest caused the Vienna Chamber of Commerce to file a complaint against me for the illegal export of the cotton fabrics. Again the Customs Search made an appearance, who wanted to know from which firms in Vienna I had purchased the fabrics. Their criminal procedure against me soon had to be stopped, since I was able to refer them to the export release issued by the Secretary of the Economy (Wirtschaftsministerium). At the time of Austria annexation to the German Reich, the right hand evidently did not know what the left hand was doing.

The bleaching plant Josef Keim in Hirtingen had been hired by me to deliver the bleached 36,000 meter of linen to the Arian linen factory Wolf & Co. in Plauen/Vogtland. Keim, however, instigated the confiscation of the material by the price control authority, and purchased it from them twenty percent below my purchase price. The profit was also confiscated and retained for the German Reich. At that time, however, I had already emigrated from Germany.

After the not exactly pleasant experiences in Vienna, and the troubles with the duty search people, I went on vacation. In view of an old rheumatic ailment I went for treatment to Pystian, a Slovak spa. On the return trip, I went through Prague. Near the Wenzelplatz I heard threatening calls, because I sat in a German car. The incensed natives yelled "Nazi! Nazi!" I showed the furious crowd through the open window my Polish passport. Afterwards, I was allowed to leave Prague without any further molestation. As I entered Karlsbad it was the contrary: because of my German car I was greeted with "Heil Hitler". Heading for Leipzig, I reached the Czech customs duty border in Gottesgab.

After I had shown the border guard my Polish passport, he told me in confidence that the German customs search had inquired at the Czech customs duty office whether I was still within Czech territory; and if I had reason to be apprehensive, it might be better for me not to return to Germany. In spite of this warning, I continued my trip. At the German customs office, the official asked to see my passport, which he had never done before, because I traveled to Czechoslovakia so frequently. He took some notes and returned the passport to me. This strange behaviour made me suspect that the customs search in Leipzig had left orders to report my re-entry. The customs search probably had once again come up with a plan to agitate me, is what I thought. Before I proceeded with the journey, the border guard told me that a blackout had been ordered for all of Germany. When I asked for the reason, he told me that German troops were marching to the Sudetenland, in order to annex it to the Reich! But I did not encounter, from the border to Leipzig, one single German soldier, nor a military vehicle.

Once back in Leipzig, I heard on the evening radio program that Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Baladier were conducting negotiations concerning the cession of the Sudetenland to the German Reich. Already the next day brought the news that the Sudetenland had become part of Germany. The good reasoning power of the Western statesmen had avoided a war. But Hitler was celebrated as a German hero. And the agitation against the Jews grew stronger.

The Jew defamation now knew no limits. I saw the large picture of a Jew in a caftan near the Czech border customs office. He carried a large bale of rags on his back. Underneath the inscription "That is how they arrived, and that is how they will leave." It was not difficult to guess that the poster originated in Julius Streicher's agitating newspaper "Der Stuermer".

In a vegetarian restaurant in Leipzig I overheard two young Jews at the next table, who were saying that Jews were no longer serviced in the Cafe Fritsche. That seemed to me incredible, since this cafe was located in the same building as my store, where I was a daily guest and a respected regular. The same day I asked the waiter if the rumor was true. He confirmed that Mrs. Fritsche has ordered him to no longer wait on Jews.

I confronted her. Frau Fritsche stated that her guests had requested her to keep the cafe free of Jews; but I would continue to be regarded as a welcome guest. "I renounce your hospitality!" was my reply and I have not set foot into the restaurant since.

One day after my return from Czechoslovakia, the customs search inspector Muehlmann, accompanied by a colleague, appeared in my office. Whether I had the intention to vacation in Switzerland? I had dropped that plan, since I could not obtain the applied-for currency in time. Do you maintain a bank account in Switzerland, Holland, or elsewhere abroad? I answered negatively, whereupon he took a Karlsbader bank form from his briefcase, which bore my signature. Whether I still denied having an account abroad? Herr Muehlmann, I opened the account in Karlsbad several years ago, but the deposited money belonged to my sister who resides in Poland. I have proof of this.

Muehlmann asked me to accompany him to police headquarters, for the purpose of clarifying this matter, as he said. Which I understood to mean that he intended to take me into custody. As a precaution, I took 3,000 Reichsmark out of my business cash register and put it in my pocket. On the way to the police headquarters, Muehlmann searched my private apartment. He found a photo album on the desk and started to leaf through it. In order not to be disturbed in this activity, he sent his colleague and me into the bedroom. In the album he found the act photo of a pretty mulatto girl, which I had taken during a Mediterranean trip in a brothel in Casablanca. The photo seemed to interest him more than the apartment search, since he stole it while we were in the bedroom. He also took the picture of a jumping dolphin. These two photos were probably his souvenirs of the search, and they were also the result.

He continued his interrogation in police headquarters. Whether I deposited dollars, mark, or other currency when I opened the account with the Karlsbader Bank? Since I could not remember these details anymore, I asked to take a look at the account, which was opened more than six years earlier. Herr Muehlmann's reply: "If I insist that six years have gone by since the account was opened, and you cannot remember the details, then you have frankly been cheating for six years!" This unprofessional remark caused ... (end of pg.)

I was taken into custody. I asked the detention judge to record the reason for my refusal to make a statement in my file. I deposited the 3,000 mark from my cash register in the court accounting office and applied for my own food supply. The officials must have been aware that I made the deposit; they made an effort to keep me comfortable, particularly the older ones who had a conservative attitude towards National Socialism. In comparison with the NS careerman Muehlmann they proved to be real human beings. The provisions, delivered daily by a hotel, let me temporarily forget that I sat in a prison. But I got accustomed to the idea that the investigation might take months.

Life in the prison resembled that of a barracks. In the morning, the prisoners had to line up in order to be shaved. Later on they were lead on a walk around the courtyard, to breathe fresh air. There was also a library, from where one could have books brought into one's cell, to combat boredom. The court prison in Leipzig had four floors, and was clean and quiet.

When I stood in line for the first time, my cellblock supervisor was astonished. He told me I could acquisition a razor and have it paid for from my deposited account. Whether I could take the instrument into me cell, I asked. Yes, you may, he replied, you are not going to take your life, are you! I asked him to procure the razor, which he brought already the next day, complete with brush and soap, and even offered to bring warm water. I was able to fulfill all my wishes in regard to food supplies. Since I had been fearful that a war might break out, I had accumulated a large supply of preserves (canned food), and the cigarettes would have lasted for quite a long time.

During our promenade in the courtyard I noticed several Jews known to me, but could not talk with them and ask them for the reason why they were here. My cellblock supervisor explained it to me: the three Jews were taken into custody for their own protection, since during the past night a pogrom-like disturbance had taken place, with lootings and robberies; synagogues had been set on fire and Jewish-looking persons had been beaten on the streets. The Jews had suffered casualties and wounded. This was the later-called "Kristallnacht" during which much glass and porcelain had been smashed. When the daily newspaper "Leipzig ... (end of pg.)

When the NS-authorities stopped the pogrom, two men arrived at the Bureau of Justice and asked inspector Schreier to summon me to a business conference. I was lead into Herr Schreier's office by an official, where the two men were waiting for me. I recognized one of them as the owner of a partial payment business; the other one was his bookkeeper. They did not even ask me whether I was interested in the sale of my business, instead they presented me with a transfer contract they had brought along, for my signature. I declined. Presently I was solely interested in the regaining of my freedom, and not in the sale of my business. Disappointed over the refusal, my neighbor explained: even if you regain your freedom, you will not be able to continue with your business, because you will be deported out of the German Reich. I left the men sitting in the justice bureau and asked to be returned to my cell. The justice inspector Schreier, who was present during the conference, had the impression that intimidation was used in order to obtain my signature.

One half year went by, then I was transferred from Leipzig to the Special Court for Foreign Currency Matters (Sondergericht fuer Devisensachen) to Freiberg. I was glad about the change, since I assumed that this would soon be followed by a court procedure before the Freiberg Court. My money was immediately tranferred from the court accounting office in Leipzig to Freiberg, and I applied for my own food supply. I received daily from the train station restaurant (Bahnhofsgaststaette) in Freiberg my breakfast, lunch and dinner, like a hotel guest.

I was not able, however, to hire an attorney for my defense, since Jewish lawyers after the issuance of the race laws, were no longer allowed to practice, and Arian attorneys were not permitted to represent Jews in legal matters. Therefore, I formulated my own defense mentally and rehearsed many sleepless nights the court hearings, even a trial before the special court. I had to have an answer read to every question that might be asked by the court or by the prosecuting attorney. I was familiar with all procedures and accusations. Only once during my pretrial detention came the legal consultant of the Polish Consul General, Dr. Brey mann, to visit me in prison and brought me greetings and words of encouragement from the Vice Consul. My former lawyer, Justizrat Dr. Drucker, was not in a position to help me, since he, too, was no longer allowed to practice law. Only after Reichsjustizminister Dr. Guertner issued him a permit for the re-opening of his law office, did he come to Freiberg. I explained to him the circumstances of my case. Once he was so informed, he inquired with the investigating magistrate, when a trial could be expected.

He was told that a trial was still far into the future. The court refused to grant the high bail which was offered. After I had been taken into custody, the foreign currency bureau appointed a commissioned administrator for my business. He immediately cancelled my chief clerk's power of attorney, since he suspected him to be dishonest. He left my firm and became an employee of the aforementioned Partial Payment Business. It was he who was trying to help his new employer to gain control over my business.

Muehlmann left my file unprocessed, in order to prolong the pretrial detention, while the Freiburger tried everything to bring this detention to an end. He requested the files from Leipzig. When they finally arrived at the special court, the prosecuting attorney filed a complaint because of failure to register an account at a foreign bank. When I refuted the accusation, the investigating magistrate returned the files to Leipzig and set a period of two weeks, during which the customs search was to examine my objections and interrogated my witnesses.

One morning I was surprised to find that a breakfast coffee from the prison kitchen had been placed in front of my celldoor. I thought someone had made a mistake in the kitchen and turned to the cell supervisor who reported to me that the train station restaurant leaseholder had refused to continue to supply me with their services, because a Jew should be satisfied with the prison food. I refused to accept the prison kitchen coffee and asked my cell supervisor to put in a request for an audience for me with the prosecuting attorney. He agreed to see me the same day. When I explained the reason for my visit, I noticed that he was already informed about this matter. He regretted the behaviour of the restaurant leaseholder and told me that even the court's president was disgusted with his attitude. I called the prosecutor's attention to the fact, that I was not here because I was a Jew, but because I was suspected to have committed a foreign exchange offense. There existed, after all, a contract between the court and the restaurant which obligated the restaurant to supply the meals to the person detained. If the restaurateur did not keep this contract, then the court should hire another one to provide the private supplies.

The prosecutor who was uncomfortable with this whole affair, insinuated that I would not be much longer in Freiberg. This indication did not stop me from insisting on my right to supply my own food. I announced that I would not touch the prison food. The prosecutor did not react to the threat of a hunger strike, and stated again that my liberation was close at hand. I left good enough alone.

The cell supervisor told me on the very same day, that I would be dismissed from the detention the next morning; he had heard this in the judicial office. The next day I was called into the judicial office. I saw the judicial inspector prepare several copies of the discharge from custody papers. My joy was indescribable. You are allowed to leave Freiberg, the inspector said to me, and handed over the papers. He must call to me attention that, after a complaint had been filed, a hearing would be taking place before the special court, to which I had to appear.. Also he must warn me not to try to evade this hearing. I thanked the judicial officials for the friendly treatment and promised them that I would consider it my duty, wherever I might be, to consider German justice, as I had experienced it, as completely correct. After I collected my belongings from the cell and had thanked the prison officials for the kindnesses shown me, I picked up my money from the court accounting office and went to the gate. There, even the prison director was standing to say Good Bye to me as a free man.

From the Freiberg train station I immediately telephoned with my office in Leipzig. The cashier, who had worked long years in my firm, could not believe her ears, and gave the receiver, totally dumfounded, to the tax advisor, who stood nearby. He recognized my voice, congratulated me to the release from custody, and promised to pick me up from the Leipzig main train station. Meanwhile, he gave Justizrat Dr. Drucker the news. "Don't joke about this, Mr. Gunold", replied my defense attorney. He could not believe that I was a free man. What two attorneys were not able to do, was accomplished by the fanatic restaurant leaseholder of the Freiberg train station restaurant. This miracle happened on the Friday before the Day of Ascension holiday, in June of 1939. My cashier, who had come with Herr Gunold to the Leipzig train station, said that there was no more beautiful gift for Pfingsten (than my return). Even two days earlier I would not have dared to contemplate such a turn of events. Friends now advised me to make public appearances.

We went to the Palastkaffee, where Jews were still welcome. What a sensation! Many of my acquaintances had long since given me up, they did not believe to ever see me again. My cousin, who had visited my sister in Poland, said to her, Golde, I don't want to make your heart heavy, but I must tell you, "you will not see David again."

I had just spent the first night again in my bed, when I received, in the morning mail, the deportation papers from police headquarters, to leave the German Reich. I guessed that the special court was behind this, which wanted to test me whether I would try to evade a hearing before them. But it was also possible that the Freiberg court wanted to avoid this hearing, so as not to offend the restaurant leaseholder, who was a prominent party member; and this could be circumvented by my deportation. But I was determined to fight for my rights to the end. I informed Justizrat Dr. Drucker of the deportation order, and asked him to inform, in turn, the special court in Freiberg. The deportation order was withdrawn by police headquarters the following day.

I found the waiting for a hearing unnerving. I did not fear the lawsuit, but an outbreak of war against Poland. In this case, as citizen of an enemy state, I would have been lost. Finally, the hearing date was set to be August 15, 1939. I drove to Freiberg, accompanied by attorneys Dr. Drucker and Dr. Breymann, as well as my witness Gunold. We encountered inspector Muehlmann, who had been subpoenaed as a witness, at the court gate. "Good morning, Inspector!" "Good morning. We will see what today's hearing will bring." "I am full of confidence." "We'll have to wait and see!"

Regional court director Dr. Friesecke, as chairman, started the hearing at nine o'clock. I sat in the (defendant) dock, my attorney at a table next to me, inspector Muehlmann and tax consultant Gunold sat in the first row of the audience area; the second plaintiff from the customs office sat together with the prosecutor.

When the chief justice had read the complaint, he ordered me to comment on the accusations. I told the court why I had opened an account at the Unionbank in Karlsbad in the first place. I tried to counter the offenses which were mentioned in the accusations. The chief justice interrupted me, because he did not ... again ... (end of pg.)

But he wanted to know why I now was able to remember all the details, while I had stated during the interrogation by Mr. Muehlmann that I could no longer recall all details pertaining to the account opening in Karlsbad. This, for me, was a welcome signal for an answer.

Mr. Chairman and Judges! I am not surprised that you directed this question to me. You will surely believe that the long detention did not improve my memory. I made the same statement to Mr. Muehlmann as I am making today before this court. But Mr. Muehlmann wanted to know more, particularly which currency I deposited at the time of the account opening. This I was not able to recall after such a long time. I asked Mr. Muehlmann, therefore, to allow me to see the Karlsbader account ledger, so that I could give him accurate information concerning the transactions and closing of the account. Six years had past, after all, since the opening of the account. Mr Muehlmann's response was, verbatim: "If you maintain that you cannot remember which currency you deposited, since six years have passed, then you have cheated six years! I reacted to this unprofessional remark with the refusal to be further interrogated by him. I told him that I considered the session as finished, and that I was not willing to make any further statements. Mr. Muehlmann replied that he had time, but that I would be detained until I was willing to make a statement."

The judges retired to hold a conference. They decided that Muehlman would not be questioned and was allowed to leave the courtroom. This gave me a lot of satisfaction. The prosecutor then described me as being a sly and cunning businessman, like most of my brothers in faith, which had been evidenced in today's hearing. But he was unable to prove a criminal offense, and did not demand a stated penalty. The secondary plaintiff, the foreign currency person, on the other hand, demanded a fine of 100,000 mark. Before the chief judge gave the word to the defense, he asked the prosecutor if he still had questions for the defendant. "No, thanks! was the answer.

Justizrat Drucker confined himself to the remark, that the litigation could have been avoided if the customs search had acted more business-like; he must reproach Mr. Muehlmann for that. He moved for an acquittal. The tax consultant Gunold swore under oath that he himself had posted the foreign currency as I had stated.

Again a conference by the judges, then the verdict: "In the Name of the People! The defendant is acquitted, the expenses will be borne by the State." Reasoning: The defendant opened an account with the Unionbank in Karlsbad in 1933. He could not have guessed that the customs search would try to trick him some day with this affair. At that time, foreign currency export was free. Later on, he should have registered this account with the Reichsbank. But when the registration law was passed, there was no longer any money in the account. The defendant has therefore not committed a punishable offense by not registering his account. Inspector Muehlmann was still in the courtroom when the verdict and the reasoning were read.

As I was returning to Leipzig with my attorneys and witness Gunold, I invited them to eat in the train station restaurant in Chemnitz. At the next table sat Muehlmann with the secondary plaintiff from the foreign currency office. I talked intentionally with my companions about the hearing, and emphasized, fully audible to my neighbors, that there were still courageous judges in Germany who adhered to law and order. For Herr Muehlmann the Freiberg court action was a good lesson.

The acquittal in Freiberg opened for me the way abroad. Muehlmann had confiscated my passport at the time of my arrest; the Polish Consul General issued me immediately a new one. The French Vice Consul, a friend of mine, issued me a two-year permanent visa. I left my movable goods with the Spedition Schenker and Co. moving company, and gave orders to ship it as soon as I knew where I would stay.

The bank account which had been blocked after my arrest was still inaccessible for me. In order to be able to draw on it, I applied for an authorization with the foreign currency office in Leipzig. I had given the official an application to withdraw 300 mark. The permit returned to me was for 3000 mark. I believed an error had occurred and told him so, whereupon he change the sum. Since this was an unusually friendly geste on the official's part, I wanted to show him my gratitude, and offered him the fabrics from Vienna, those without any added fibers, at wholesale prices. He declined and thanked me, since he, as a bureaucrat, was not allowed to accept any favors.

When I told him that, after my imminent emigration, the remaining materials would be confiscated and auctioned off, I gained his confidence and he confided in me that his father - postal inspector X - was still a loyal customer of my firm. His parents had very much regretted that Muehlmann had given me so much trouble. I could obtain a permit to withdraw funds for the acquisition of goods to be taken along while emigrating, he told me. I made little use of this possibility. I sold the remaining inventory to a Jewish-friendly Arian firm, who paid the invoice amount to my blocked bank account.

Now that there was nothing left to keep me in Germany, I asked the train station info booth for the best connection to Paris. There was a direct fast train, which he recommended. He answered the question as to whether this train will be scheduled for the next few days with a counterquestion: "And why not?" The outbreak of war is feared. The official must have taken me for a out-of-towner, and asked whether I had noticed that the German people wanted a war. "No people who are in a war, have ever been asked whether they wanted it, this is decided only by the politicians and the military", I replied, and left the info booth, not knowing who I was speaking with.

Back in the office I was told that a Mr. Schmidt of the NSDAP regional government wanted to see me. He was surely a Jew-hater, since he asked her whether Jews were still employed in my store. But that was not the case. Mr. Schmidt informed me that the recently conducted price investigation in my business had been completed without fault-finding: only one more detail; the Secretary of the Economy wanted to know the price paid for the 36,000 meter untreated linen, which were still at the Keim bleaching plant. The secretary showed him the purchase invoice, whereby Schmidt's official duty was completed.

What are your intentions from now on, he asked. I showed him my visa for France. After your departure, the German people will have one additional hater abroad. I do not have to travel, to hate; I already hate here, but not the German people, but those who are guilty treating us so inhumanly. Schmidt got up and offered me his hand to shake. I admire your courage to express your opinion openly, even though you know where I am employed.

I should not assume that he had participated in our inhuman treatment. He was earning his daily bread by working at the regional government, he had no other means. He expressed the hope that I would keep my opinion of him and the German people. He hoped that I would soon be able to return into a liberated Germany.

At the barbershop, where I went daily for a shave, the owner regretted not being able any longer to serve me. Probably for the same reason as in the Cafe Fritsche, I thought. But Mrs. Seifert explained with a heavy heart that during the previous night both of her assistants had been called to arms, and now she was without an income base. Another woman in the salon added that her son had left the previous day with a military special unit, from the main train station, supposedly to help with the harvest in East Prussia. Who could doubt any longer, that war against Poland was imminent?

In flight! At six o'clock in the morning a business friend with American citizenship called me to tell me that his Consul had called him at midnight and advised him to leave Germany without delay. Now it was also time for me. During the drive to the train station I gave my tax consultant a general power of attorney for my business and asked him whether nobody could see that the German people were headed for a catastrophe? I only had one wish left, namely to cross the border and leave behind me the country which I once so highly respected.

I crossed the western border of the Reich together with a business friend. At the Paris train station we noticed that France had given the mobilization order. The French were reluctant; it was clear that a war would be started against their will. Radio Paris urged all foreigners to leave the city if they did not have a valid reason for staying.

I wanted to obtain an immigration visa, together with my cousin who had joined me from Amsterdam, from the Swiss Consulate. But when we noticed the hundreds of persons in front of their building, we turned around. Since we could not enter Switzerland normally, we were planning to do it illegally; by driving to the Genfer See and enter the neutral country via Evian Les-Bains. The schedule was already irregular, so that we boarded a freight train until Bellegarde, near the Genfer See (Lake Geneva). We promenaded through the little town until the train left for Evian, and encountered upon our return to the station a military guard, who prevented us from entering the train station.

We had to obtain a "Laisser-Passer" from the train station commissioner. So we asked the commissioner for a permit, after presenting our passports. What we wanted in Evian? My cousin referred to the radio appell, telling foreigners to leave Paris. And why must you go to Evian? I suffer from rheumatism and want to take a cure there. And you, turning to my cousin, what do you want in Evian. We have left Germany together, and would like to stay together. The police commissioner asked him nervously, why he did not go to Poland, to defend his fatherland, which was bleeding? The Polish embassy in Paris had not yet called their citizens to do that, replied my cousin. Now the Frenchman lost his composure, and he hit my cousin in the face. He was evidently furious that his confreres had to get involved in a war which was none of their business. "Mourir pour Danzig." (Die for Danzig). He accused us to be genuine Nazis, did not listen to any explanations, and ordered a colleague to perform a body search. Everything was taken from us, and we were locked into a dark basement of the train station. Meanwhile, all our luggage was searched, and the photo, which I took on the plateau of the Grossglockner mountain, was found. The clearly visible swastika flags made the commissioner suspicious that we were German spies with fake passports, and did not accept my explanation of how I happened to have this picture. He got in touch with the French counterspy organization "Deuxieme Bureau", which called the Polish Consul General in Lyon. Since he wanted to see the passports, we had to be taken there from Bellegarde, because the police could not keep us longer than twentyfour hours without having a legal order to take us into custody. Guarded by two detectives, we drive in a separate compartment in the fast train to Lyon. While in the train, I asked them where my camera had been put, which was taken from me in Bellegarde. It is in the suitcase, together with all other things. The question was valid, since I had not carried the camera in the suitcase, but on my body.

In Lyon we were, like tourists, given rooms in a hotel. The officers left us and took our passports with them, but did not reappear as agreed upon. Therefore, we went to the Polish Consulate ourselves. Once there, an official explained to us that my photo with the swastikas had raised the suspicion that we were Germans of the Fifth Column, who wanted to flee to Switzerland after the war would have broken out.

In the meantime, the two detectives had shown our passports, which the Consul found to be in order. He had mentioned to them that we were respected Polish citizens, which was evidenced by our passports which were valid for three years, as well as the permanent visa issued by the French Consulate in Leipzig. Both officers had apologized for their mistake, and had returned to Bellegarde. Now we were free again. I wanted to realize my plan to enter via Evian into Switzerland, but my cousin was too frightened and did not want to take another risk. We decided, therefore, to go to Vichy for a few weeks. Once in our rooms there, I unpacked my large suitcase and found everything except my camera. I reported the loss to the Consul and asked him to please help me retrieve the disappeared object. He advised me to hire a lawyer in Vichy, which I did. The attorney demanded an investigation in the Bellegarde train station commissary.

After one week, the camera arrived at the Lyon Consulate with the apology that it had to be ascertained whether the camera contained forbidden snapshots of the Bellegarde fortification area.

The season in Vichy came to a close, and a sort of autumnal boredom sat in at the resort. Many of our acquaintances departed. My cousin wanted to go to Nizza (Nice), since we had heard that many apartments were empty there. So we packed up, went to Nizza, and rented a beautifully furnished two-bedroom apartment for three months, because my cousin wanted to accommodate a full orphan, one of his cousins who lived with an uncle in Amsterdam, to join us. She had residence difficulties in Holland and joined us already a few days later. My cousin looked right away for another dwelling, since he wanted to marry his cousine, and found a small, furnished villa near the outskirts of Nizza, and moved in. I moved to the Promenade des Anglais, the best neighborhood, into a comfortable one bedroom apartment. In the apartment adjacent to mine lived married couple, he Jewish, she Christian, who I knew already from Leipzig. They had left Germany already several years earlier.

Nizza, which was inhabited before the war mainly by Englishmen and Americans, had grown during the war into a world city. Many refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia found from here the way overseas. There was also a large influx of Jews from Paris and Northern France. They believed to be safe, in unoccupied regions, from German persecutors. I, also, declined an emigration to the USA, because I ... European ... (end of pg.)

In the back of my mind was also the wish, not to have to leave my German girlfriend.

No refugee was given permission to work; the cost of living expenses had to be paid out of personal funds. A residence permit was obtainable only after a refugee had deposited a certain sum in French francs. Those who did not have enough cash, were helped out with loans from friends.

In ca. mid-1942, the Laval government gave in to German pressure to extradite the from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia after 1936 immigrated Jews to the Germans. The Laval government, which was not exactly Jew-friendly, feared that the French would oppose these measures, and designed a plan which was to mislead the French people as well as the refugees concerned. The rumor was spread that the Jewish refugees were to be employed, and for this reason had to be given a physical examination to determine their state of health. The designated physicians called the refugees to make appointments for them; they had to pay for the examinations themselves. After completion, the persons concerned were assigned to dozens of small villages where they were forced to live, demonstratively in order to alleviate the accumulation of refugees in the large cities. In reality, this measure was designed to allow the police fast action when the Germans issued the deportation order.

Many refugees were able to flee to Spain, with falsified passports and with the support from French friends. France was very willing to cooperate with the Germans in their measures against the Jews, otherwise the French police would not have made such an effort to catch the troubled Jews and deliver them to the Germans.

The French government knew of the occupational forces' plans to extradite the Jews who had escaped to France, to Germany; they did nothing to try to change the Germans' mind. To the contrary, the French police has been a big help to the Germans in the annihilation of their Jews. The Jews' forced residence in the small villages enabled the police to arrest them quickly and deport them to Germany, where, instead of being employed, they were totally annihilated.

I had entered France in August of 1939, and was therefore added to the deportation list to Germany. I first tried to find out, when the Jews, destined for deportation, would be handed over to the Germans. The custodian of my furnished apartment offered me her help; in reality, she was interested to see me in the hands of the French police so that, after my arrest, she could come into possession of my valuables. Therefore, she tried to trick me by saying that she had a good relationship with the head of police, and was consequently able to tell me that the deportation rumors were untrue, spread by black market dealers, who were after the cheap acquisition of Jewish valuables. Since I had been made aware of the custodian's real intentions, I was not deceived and asked a police official that I knew, for the date of the arrests. He was not allowed to tell me, he said, except that it was "not today". I concluded that it would probably be on the next day.

I immediately informed my friends and acquaintances and contemplated with my also threatened neighbors in the same building, what we could do in order to avoid an arrest. First of all, we locked all the doors and lowered the blinds, to give the impression that nobody was at home. I secured the door to my apartment so carefully, that it could not be opened by force, and went to bed. The doorbell rang at six o'clock in the morning. Through the keyhole I saw three big-bellied policemen of the Garde Mobile. They waited a few minutes for someone to open. When no-one responded, they tried, in vain, to open the door by using force. When again nothing happened, they tried a trick: they let the custodian call me on the phone. Since I did not lift the receiver, they brought a locksmith into the building, who was to help them open the door. He used master keys, but was unsuccessful because I had a safety lock on the door. The police had no other choice but to enter a stage of siege. From then on, the whole floor was totally quiet.

They succeeded better with one of my neighbors, where they had also rang the doorbell at six a.m. They opened the door and saw the policemen, who had come to arrest them. While mother and daughter packed a few things to take along, the husband cut open his veins. He was immediately taken to a hospital, which he was able to leave without being molested after his recuperation, since meanwhile the Italians had occupied Nice. His wife and daughter, however, were ... (end of page).

But we who have survived Auschwitz know only too well that the women there ended in the gas chambers. Theodor Wolf, former Chief Editor of the Berliner Tagesblatt, who lived in our building and fell into the hands of the police, suffered the same fate.

I realized that I must stay in the apartment until the besiegers left for lunch. Around noontime I heard my neighbor speak German in the hallway, and concluded that the siege had been given up. I pocketed a few valuables and opened the door. I saw no-one in the hallway. I rang my neighbors doorbell, who let me in right away. Her door, too, had been rung at six that morning; she had been able to get rid of them by stating that her Jewish husband had escaped to Spain. In reality, he was hiding in an empty box garage.

I could not stay in the apartment, since the police was bound to return at any moment. I had to see the custodian to tell her that I would not return to my apartment. I took the elevator down to the garage and observed through a small window that the police was controlling passersby. Trucks waited on street corners to transport the arrested. So it was impossible, at this time, to get away from the Promenade des Anglais. I had to wait!

Finally, the police disappeared from in front of my building. I left the garage. But a policeman approached on the sidewalk. A jump into the next building. He passed without noticing me. The searchers had entered the Promenade's side streets. I took heart and crossed the Promenade to the beach. Walking along the quai wall, I advanced to the suburb California, where the custodian lived, and where she also took care of an old castle which belonged to an Englishman. When she saw me in the castle park, she called to me "My husband is on his way to see you, he wanted to find out whether you were able to escape". She was obviously disappointed that her plan had not worked out. Out of a bad conscience, she offered to take me to an empty apartment in the castle's wing, where I could stay, out of danger. I spent the night on the floor of the totally empty apartment. I did not see the custodian's husband, though he, too, was well known to me. He was probably angry that I had managed to escape from my apartment. Even though, the couple did not want to abandon the intention to let me fall into the hands of the police. They did, on the other hand, not dare a direct denunciation for fear of the Maquis (Marquis?). They assured me that I could ... (end of pg.)

She came to me with a second suggestion: she knew, in the nearby village Bois de Bologne, a gardener who was looking for an assistant. She was going there this afternoon, and I could accompany her. The way there would not present a danger for me, since outside of the city there were no police controls. I accepted her offer to accompany her to the gardener. In transit, I encountered one dangerous moment: armed policemen were controlling suspicious-looking passersby near the underpass. That was, again, a trap set by the custodian, since she went daily to the garden supply place, she must have known that we had to pass the underpass which was being watched. I could not turn back without looking suspicious, and joined a group of older women who walked in the same direction. With a vegetable basket in my hand I did not arouse and curiosity, and was able to pass the underpass without being controlled. We arrived safely at the garden supply place. When the owner had listened to my story, he kept me there right away.

I slept the first night on a mattress in a wooden hut, where a heap of potatoes was stored. I awoke from an explosion sound. I thought of an attack, but nothing happened, so I thought my nerves had played a trick on me. Then I noticed a sourly smell, and discovered several bottles filled with tomato juice, which had started to ferment. The cork had shot out of one of the bottles, and had caused the noise. Calmed down, I went back to sleep.

The next morning, I learned to pick cress. A difficult sort of work, since one must kneel on a wooden board and pull the cress out, roots and all, from a mud basin; then the roots had to be severed from the cress and replanted in the basin, where they started to grow again after ca. 14 days. I adapted quickly to this hard task. The gardener's youngest son told me that his father had said, I was an Ace in the cress-picking field. But I still could not feel I was safe. Even though the gardener and his wife took the cress to the market in Nice twice a week, many people came directly to the plantation to buy vegetables. I identified myself as being Swiss, when I had to talk with them.

On days when the gardeners went to market, I also cooked. Once I prepared a meatless meal, which was not known in France: cauliflower from the garden, half-cooked, cut into slices, brushed with egg yolk, covered with crumbs, put in the oven; small potatoes half-cooked, peeled, dipped in oil and put in the oven. Served with green salad with a gourmet sauce. My employers were so impressed, that I had to prepare the same meal when they had relatives visiting.

Since the time of the extensive police search, the connection with my cousin was interrupted. I called an acquaintance who told me that my relatives had similar experiences as myself. They, too, had their doorbells rung at six a.m., and they had hidden in the villa's attic until evening. Then they had hauled mattresses to a gravel pit behind the villa and slept there. They spent eight days there; an Italian cleaning woman brought them secretly the most necessary for survival; later she got them shelter with her relatives, who took them in without registration by the police.

After France had extradited several thousand Jewish refugees to Germany, a wave of protest went through the free world. General de Gaulle appealed to his compatriots via Radio London to help the persecuted Jews. This resulted in a more humane treatment by the French police, and arrested persons were set free under a pretense. Once, when a policeman had taken me to his station, because my identity card had expired, the commissioner gave me a wink "Get lost!" During the summer of 1943, Italian troops occupied, in collaboration with the German Army, the city of Nice. Their commander ordered the French police to free all Jews who were held for deportation.

Now I was able to return to Nice without fear, and to meet my cousin and friends who had managed to evade the deportation. Once again, the persecuted Jews in Nice were able to lead a liberated life.

On a Sunday evening I missed the last streetcar and had to return on foot to the gardener's place. I police control stopped me and advised me, very politely, to have my identity card extended. The won-again freedom tempted me to move back into the city. I left the gardener's place and rented a furnished room. I was able to avoid registration with the police by paying the landlord a higher rent. I could eat in a nearby restaurant. When I heard that another restaurant in my vicinity had opened up, I went there for a change. The owner prepared the meals, the wife served on the guests. The food was excellent, and very important: one did not need to have meat- and bread coupons.

As I was just getting ready to pay and leave, two German officers entered. They had difficulties with the language when trying to order. The hostess guessed that I would be able to interpret for them, which I did.

I also helped them chose the beverages. They invited me to a glass of wine at their table. "I think it will be in the interest of both of us if we converse sitting at different tables, Gentlemen!" "Why" "I have a non-Arian grandmother." Aha, the officers must have thought, a Jew! "We are members of the armed forces and have nothing to do with the Nationalsozialismus. Come and drink a glass of wine with us!" I was curious and joined them. One of them was named Christ and came from Duesseldorf, Kramer came from Berlin. Both were member of the Wehrmacht's High Command in Toulon. We conversed easily and avoided the war-theme. I discouraged them to drink a second bottle, because it did not make a good impression if soldiers walked around intoxicated. Kramer and Christ followed my advice. But they wanted under all circumstances to make a sightseeing tour, which was why they had come to Nice in the first place. They invited me to accompany them. We took a horse-drawn carriage at the train station; I had the top pulled up, because I did not wish to be seen with uniformed men, neither by the rather German-unfriendly French nor from my Jewish fellow-sufferers. We ended up, finally, in a high-class bar at the Place Massena. Against my will, the officers ordered a bottle of Champagne. The French guests regarded us quite openly, and the waiter stayed nearby trying to catch our words.

I raised the first glass to drink to an early peace and tolerance between the nations. Kramer told us he had just returned a few days ago from a furlough in Berlin. I asked "how are the Jews there, in this war situation?" "Jews? There are no more Jews in Germany." "But where did they go?" "Don't ask me. I don't want to make your heart heavy."

After the second glass, Kramer's tongue was getting loose. The Jews have been transported to the East. When I was still in Russia, I once saw that Jews had to dig their graves at the edge of a wooden area. Afterwards, they were shot and thrown into the graves.

The two officers raised their glasses and toasted to the Fuehrer's early demise. I started to sweat, since I feared the soldiers might accuse me to have encouraged them to insult the Fuehrer. I asked them to change the subject, and called for the check, so that we could take leave of one another as soon as possible. In parting, the two officers expressed their regret that Germans were willing to commit such crimes.

A short time earlier, the Italians had occupied Southern France and also Nice. At the time rumors were heard that the Italians were striving for a separate piece, and that some troop divisions would refuse to fight on the side of the Germans. It did not take long, and the Italian occupation in Southern France was replaced by German troops. Along with the Wehrmacht (armed forces), the Gestapo also moved into Nice. They confiscated, of all places, the Hotel "Excelsior" which was located behind the building in which I had rented my furnished room. The Gestapo hired several Jews and employed them, supposedly, in administrative services, with the promise that they would not be deported; in reality they were to serve as spies. But this I did not know until later.

One day I noted through my room's window a passing Jew, whom I slightly knew. I thought, if a Jew can walk right by the Gestapo center, then I should be able to go to the bakery across the street and purchase a loaf of bread: this man, should he see me, would not betray me, since such an act would be regarded amongst Jews as a big crime. So I went and bought the bread. This man had seen me, and took note of the building into which I returned.

The next day, he showed up in my apartment with a Gestapo official, but kept himself in the background. The Gestapoman, entering my room, asked in French to see my Carte D'Identite. I responded in German: "You want to see my identification card only to ascertain whether I am Jewish. For that, I do not have to show you my identification, since I am a Jew." Surprised, he called to the one waiting in the anteroom: "Francois, did you hear that? He admits freely that he is a Jew. So much honesty I have never seen." Francois left quietly, since he was aware that I had recognized him as a Jew. Now I knew that he was a an informer and collaborator of the Gestapo. I would not have taken my arrest so serious if the officer from Berlin had not told me, weeks earlier, of his observation in Russia, and the Jews that were shot at the forest edge. On the other hand, I acquiesced to the arrest calmly, since by now a terrible ending was preferable to a terror without an end.

It was clear to me that it was not a vacation trip that lay ahead of me. Expecting the worst, I thought the Nazis could do no more than kill me.

I told the Gestapoman, who was rather friendly: "This is not the first time that my life is being threatened. I have experienced this during the First World War, and hope to survive it also during the Second." He advised me to take sturdy shoes and a warm blanket along, and then took me to the Excelsior. There, I was approached by Francois who told me to find a Mr. Tschopik after arriving at the Drancy camp, who worked in the administration and came from Leipzig. He might be able to help me to stay in Drancy.

The next day I was transported to Paris with a group of prisoners, being guarded by a SD-group, in a speedy train. Once arrived at the Drancy camp I looked for Mr. Tschopik, son of a well-known Leipzig attorney, and asked him, in reference to the Gestapo collaborator, for help. He did not know a Gestapo person in Nice, was his reply, and he regretted not being in a position to help me.

The Drancy camp was administrated and guarded by the French police. As far as hygiene was concerned, it was a dirty stable, but the food supply was good and generous. New transports of captured Jews arrived daily. When one thousand men had been assembled, we were loaded into twenty animal freight train wagons, with fifty prisoners in one wagon.

I joined a group of young men, who were planning to break out during transit. They were ten or twelve prisoners who all entered the same wagon, and who had brought along the right tools in their bags. When darkness descended, the organizer started to break open the bars on the wagon. Uninvolved fellow-passengers started to scream with fear that they would be killed when the breakout was discovered. We gave up our escape attempt in order not to endanger those persons. After we had crossed the German border, the train stopped at a train station. A SS-man yanked the wagon door open and demanded us to give him our cigarettes, otherwise we would be shot. We did as he asked. The train continued in the Eastern direction. We knew this because we recognized the stations from previous trips.

Twenty-four hours later, the train entered the Auschwitz ramp. Calls by the SS: "Everybody out!" When I had left the wagon, I had forgotten my suitcase and turned around to get it. A SS-man asked where I was going. To get the suitcase from the wagon. He kicked me with such force that I developed a large swollen area. That was the "visitor's card" of Auschwitz, presented to me by that SS-man.

Men and women were immediately separated. Men who looked old and no longer able to work, were taken on trucks to the annihilation camp: women and children went the same way. The men who remained on the ramp had to pass by a physician for inspection, take off their hats or caps, and state their age. Those able to work were directed to the left, those who were not, to the right. The latter followed on trucks those who were sent earlier to the annihilation camp. On such days, the gas chambers were working to full capacity.

Those men who were found to be healthy and able to work were brought to a labor camp. Quite a few of them were, after a while, so weakened by heavy work and mistreatment that they were sent, after the next selection process conducted by the same physician, a few weeks later to the gas chambers. Only the prisoners who did survive the first weeks had a chance to prolong their lives.

We, the able-bodied, were first sent to a transitory camp and were from there distributed to several labor camps. On the way there our SS-guards told us that we would have to give up all our belongings once we arrived at the camp, so we might as well turn everything over to them. Money and valuables had already been taken from us in Drancy, under threat of being shot, we were only allowed to keep the watches, which we now gave to our SS-guards.. One can imagine that they, as time went by, had quite a collection.

Dead tired we arrived in the transitory camp in the evening, where we stayed overnight. We were led to a barracks which contained bunk beds, three on top of each other, for the overnight stay. I lied down and fell asleep almost instantly. At midnight, the lights in the barracks were turned on. Several men stormed into the barracks, screamed terribly "Everybody up! Line up two by two!" They hit us with sticks and whips. As soon as all the prisoners had lined up, came the command "Everybody in the Beds!" Again we were beaten to hurry up. The light went out, the SS disappeared. As soon as we again had fallen asleep, the game started anew, and then a third time. I believed in this night to be in Hell, something in which I had not even believed as a child. But in this night it came true.

Next morning we had to take off all our clothing and turn in everything we carried on our bodies. Then we were tattooed with a prisoner number. My number was 159546. One of the prisoners who worked for the SS inserted his finger, protected by a rubber glove, in the new prisoners' anus and felt around in the large intestine for hidden gold and jewelry.

We then had to step out into the ice cold air, naked, singly, until twenty men had been assembled. In another barracks we received the KZ-outfits. Only after all prisoners had completed the procedure were we taken on trucks to the concentration camp Fuerstengrube. This was a coal mine, which had belonged to Count Pless until the First World War, but had been closed because it was not lucrative enough. Now it was converted into a KZ. A huge sign above the entrance gate read "Work makes Free". Undernourished prisoners were looking for food in the garbage bin. That gave me an inkling of what to expect.

In the Drancy camp I had encountered my friend Leo, who had been arrested in Nice by the Gestapo, together with his wife, daughter and son. By coincidence I saw him again in the Fuerstengrube, and also his sixteen year old son Gilbert. We were now stationed in a block. The oldest in the block, who was in charge of all prisoners in his block, asked me about our origin. "Did you all come from France?" and "Where were you before?" In Leipzig! He now identified himself as compatriot, he had, before the emigration to Prague, worked in his brother-in-law's fabrics wholesale business, in the same building where I had founded my firm after World War I. We could easily remember that we already knew each other in Leipzig. Those were memories of a past, golden time!

Grimm now asked me whether it was known in the unoccupied countries that three million Jews had already been killed by now in Auschwitz. I refused to believe that. It seemed impossible to me, that a government that punished a murder by death, commanded its own citizens to commit mass murder on defenseless human beings. This is what I told Grimm. He replied: "You are finding yourself in a camp where mass murder of captured persons is daily taking place, if you don't believe that, who can believe it in the so-far free world? Most of the free people knew of the annihilation of the Jews in Europe; they remained silent out of fear to end up under Hitler's totalitarian control; Switzerland is the best example of this: Hitler has threatened the neutral countries with revenge actions if they grant asylum to the Jews. That is why it happened that Switzerland had returned Jews to France, who were in danger of being deported.

In the Fuerstengrube, we first worked on the camp and suffered heavy chicanery and mistreatments. The work was not useful, but we had to be kept occupied so that we did not have time to contemplate our fate. Some of us became already disabled due to hunger, hardships and beatings, and were waiting only for the final walk to the gas chamber, for which he had been destined even before the Gestapo arrested him, only because he was born a Jew.

In the Fuerstengrube, the Kapos invented constantly new methods to teach newly arriving prisoners work discipline: in the open area in front of the camp, several Kapos would take up position, one hundred meters apart. Bricks were mounted in heaps on either side of the square. Each prisoner had to pick up three bricks, carry them, while running, to the other side, and put them down. Other prisoners had to carry them back. Some of the Kapos ran alongside of them, yelling "Faster, faster!" and beat them. The Fuerstengrube under Commander Moll had the reputation of a detention camp. When prisoners elsewhere had done something punishable, they were sent over here. Moll had the infamous Kapo Wilhelm for murdering such "offenders". Nobody asked for the reason when a prisoner marched out with his comrades in the morning and was brought back with a smashed skull in the evening.

When we left for work, we marched by the camp director's office. In front of the office building the Kapo commanded: "caps off!" and "caps on!" The first time, while leaving for our march to the workstation, I took off my cap on command. The Kapo beat me several times with the end of a thick cable on my uncovered head. The second time it happened again: Kapo Wilhelm hit me on the head, twice as often. I got dizzy, I thought the end was near. Luckily I did not lose consciousness. But when Wilhelm commanded for a third time "caps off!" I hesitated for a second and saw how the prisoner marching next to me touched his cap in front as if to lift it. I did the same and was able to escape the threatening blows. The Kapo would have beaten me to death because before I had touched the cap from the side.

We worked on leveling projects at the Fuerstengrube's new construction site. Kapo Wilhelm constantly hurried us along. If a prisoner wanted to catch his breath, Wilhelm was ready with a blow. "Jews have no right to catch their breath!" With such methods, quite a few of the healthy prisoners were made ready for the gassing. Which was, after all, the goal of a concentration camp!

All Kapos in the Furestengrube were subordinated to the jurisdiction of the Camp Elder. He had the power to punish them or replace them if they did not follow his orders. Once I saw how the Camp Elder punished the Maurer (bricklayer) kapo Goldberg with thirty blows on the behind, where he had to count each blow out loud. If he lost count, the already given blows were null and void, and the procedure started over. The Camp Elder had accused the Kapo of condoning that the bricklayer were smoking during working hours. But Goldberg, a sturdy individual, counted the blows to the very last. One of the other Kapos whom I knew already for some time, remarked to Goldberg's punishment: he would not offer the Camp Elder his ass because of prisoners who could not control themselves and were smoking while he was in charge of them.

Sometimes I experienced in the Fuerstengrube eventful days. Once, a SS-guard called to the Kapo, that he did not have anymore coal up there for his oven. Kapo Berger, who knew me by name also, ordered me to supply the watchtower with coal. I borrowed a sack from the kitchen and carried coal up to the tower. I filled the oven with coal, and was on my way to leave. But the SS-man said, I should first warm up from the icy cold outside. In the meantime, he retrieved two baked potatoes from the oven and gave them to me; I put them into my coat pocket and wanted to descend. Why are you in such a hurry? Eat the potatoes here, the Kapos down below do not have to know that I am baking potatoes up here.

Kapo Ludwig, the dogmeat-eater, once came into our sleeping room, late at night, awakened my friend Leo and me; both of us were to come to the eating room, order from Block Elder Loeffler - successor of Grimm. We followed him. What a surprise! Block Elder Loeffler and Kapo Ludwig were frying potato pancakes, and invited us to share them. Suddenly Loeffler saw the Camp Elder pass by his block. Loeffler and Ludwig hid quickly under the seating benches, Leo and I disappeared into the sleeping barracks. When the danger had passed, Kapo Ludwig came to get us again and served each of us one potato pancake. We were lucky that the Camp Elder did not enter the block, otherwise we would have shared Kapo Goldberg's fate.

Kapo Wilhelm, a lifelong penitentiary inmate and later promoted to supreme Kapo, supervised also our clearing labors in the woods. Axes and saws were on the site. I took one of the heavy axes, because that gave me more exercise than using a saw. In this very cold weather, this was important.

I hacked notches into the trees, on the side in which they were supposed to fall. Other prisoners were removing the branches. One of them, beaten by a Kapo, fell, loaded with branches, to the ground. Wilhelm stepped on top of him and trampled him to death. The murder victim had been a teacher at a Jewish school in Paris.

After this incident, one of the foremen ordered me to report to the camp commander, who had showed up with several SS-officers in this part of the forest. Moll asked me about my profession. Not knowing the reason for his question, I answered "gardener". "There, I could have guessed that a schooled laborer had done the notching", he remarked to his companions. Moll himself had been a gardener. He dismissed me, without either praising me or criticizing me. But Kapo Wilhelm was satisfied with the praise by the commander.

One day, on the way back from the workplace to the camp, a SS-man stopped us and ordered us to unload a truck loaded with carrots, and to bring them into the food storage magazine. I climbed onto the truck and filled the carrots into baskets. My comrades carried them away. As I filled the last basket, I could not resist to stash some of the carrots into my pants pocket. The SS-supervisor noticed this and gave me an angry look. Therefore, I feared a search, and secretly put the carrots into my coat sleeve. As expected, the SS-man ordered the Kapo in the magazine to search me thoroughly. I raised my arms, so that he was able to feel my body. He did not find anything, since he did not think of also fingering my raised arms. Unthinkable what would have happened to me if the Kapo had found the carrots.

One unforgettable incident was a deed by the fur trader from Leipzig. Father and son had their workplace in the coal mine and had gotten used to, as so many, to their fate. Both might have survived the "Thousand Year Reich", if the son did not suffer a tragic accident in the mine. While shunting, one of the containers, loaded with coal, drove over his foot and cut off his toes. He was taken to the hospital, he had to await the next transport to the gas chamber. He lined up, two days later, together with some of his fellow-sufferers, for the transport. Several comrades, amongst them Father Israel, to witness this sad affair.

When a SS-man ordered the departure of those selected, the son wanted to give his father a goodbye kiss. "Wait, I come with you!" The father joined them and accompanied his son to his death.

"Three strong prisoners to help in the machine operation area!" was heard one morning through the loudspeaker Kapo Wilhelm pulled me by the shirt collar from the line of our work group and also Leo, who stood behind me, and a third one from another group, who died two weeks later. He could not be helped, because he exchanged his bread for cigarettes. We marched on with the same group. Once in the area of the new structure in the mine, the head Kapo ordered us to step forward. A engineer received us and lead us into a well-heated workroom. He wanted to hear our stories, and wondered why we did not flee to Spain or Switzerland. Since he might have been a spy, I answered carefully: I have spent all my life living amongst Germans, why should I have escaped from them? Presently, the engineer confirmed was Grimm had already told us: Three million Jews had already been exterminated or gassed in Auschwitz and its surrounding camps. Now the Germans did no longer have a large enough work force , hence the Jews were no longer killed to the same extent as before! "Therefore, we have a chance to stay alive?" With a large degree of certainty, especially so since you are both still in good health."

My friend Leo and I made a great effort to do our work quickly and well: the engineer found no fault with it. After four weeks I asked him how much longer we would be employed with the construction and the locksmith work. In one week, said he, the building should be completed.

Whether we could stay longer with him? Since the new locksmith operation employed only trained personnel, I suggested that he would let us work for a trial period, because I knew that he would not easily find prisoners in the Fuerstengrube to were trained locksmiths. He accepted my proposal, and promised to requisition us a experts, since as assistant workers we had no chance to stay in the locksmith shop.

Our plan succeeded, and we were permanently transferred to the work commando machine operation. We moved into the same block were our labor group was staying. The block eldest here was Wicky Engel, whose brother was in the administration. He had the ambition to have the cleanest block in the Fuerstengrube. Perish the prisoner, who dared to enter the sleeping room with his shoes on. Engel made a cripple out of him by kicking him.

When Engel was in a bad mood, he reported the offender to the camp manager, who then used the prisoner for a sport he enjoyed: he ordered him to roll along on the ground, and agitated his German shepherd dog on him, who prevented him from rolling over.

The camp elder was the most hated by all prisoners. He was obsessed with constant camp remodeling, and preferred to employ prisoners for this purpose who had just worked twelve hours. Once he had severely mistreated one of the prisoners, and asked him afterwards, sarcastically, who had done this to him. The man concerned replied timidly, that he had fallen down the barracks stairs during the night. The camp elder then hit him in the face several times with his fist. Only then the man confessed what really had happened. You, yourself, have hurt me like this, this morning, Herr Camp Elder! "Why did you not tell the truth right away?" laughed the sadistic camp elder.

The sadism in the Fuerstengrube was sometimes without limits. In 1944, some Jews from Holland were delivered to the Fuerstengrube. One of them had diarrhea, and asked one of his comrades, where he could relieve himself? You have to ask the head kapo for permission, he was told. The head kapo refused him permission to leave the workstation. The comrades advised him to go to some corner, relieve himself, and return quickly to his work, which he did. When prisoners from a different construction firm came to pick up wooden boards, they noticed that someone had emptied his intestine on one of the boards, and they reported this to the head kapo. He knew right away who had done it, and had all the prisoners of the Humboldt construction firm lined up. Who had asked him whether he could step out? The prisoner responded immediately. "You have a choice. Do you want to lick your shit from the boards, or be beaten to death? The prisoner decided to lick. The head Kapo told the prisoners of his decision.

When lining up for the departure to the camp, he asked the Dutchman, whether he had eaten his shit. "Yes, Mr. head Kapo, that's what I did." Did it taste good? "Yes, Mr. Head Kapo, it tasted good. He was allowed to return to his line, and the head kapo used the opportunity for an address: the prisoners should be grateful to the Germans, since they were allowed to work and got food and drink like in a sanatorium. Whatever might happen to them, some of them would probably be kept alive to be used for German museums, since one would find a Jew only in a Museum anymore in Germany.

The leading engineer of the construction firm Humboldt was present at the address by the head kapo. He was determined to have this kapo removed from his territory. When he watched him as he severely mistreated a prisoner, he asked him for the reason. "Because he is lazy!" replied Wilhelm. "It is for me to judge whether a prisoner does his duty or not!" retorted the engineer. The kapo did not like this. The prisoners were under his jurisdiction, and he could beat them as long as he wanted to. The engineer: "Kapo Wilhelm, I will take steps to remove you from my construction site. If you beat my workers into cripples, I won't have any work force for my construction." The engineer's complaint was successful already on the next day. Wilhelm was not only removed, but he was demoted to work in the Grube again as a simple prisoner. But, a few days later he was re-installed.

Only rarely did the engineers and directors who were active in the Fuerstengrube stand up for the prisoners like this, and the directors of the IG-Farben, who owned the Grube, not at all. The Humboldt firm treated the prisoners well, as work comrades of the free German worker. When attorney Dr. Spitz from Berlin, employed in the tool distribution, was to lose his good place of employment due to the intrigues of the sadistic camp elder, this attempt was foiled because of the Humboldt director's resistance.

Sometimes something funny happened in the Fuerstengrube - gallows humor! Once a Bernhardiner dog had gotten lost in the KZ; perhaps he was looking for his Master, who had already been gassed. Merry kapos caught him, killed him, and distributed the meat amongst themselves. Kapo Ludwig, a criminal, came with a clump of meat to us in the locksmith shop, borrowed a cooking utensil and cooked the meat. He invited Leo and my to the meal. I declined politely, but Leo enjoyed it. The next day, the dogmeat-eaters greeted each other with a wow-wow barking.

In January 1944, we were once again awakened by the sound of sirens. The kapos pushed us with beating sticks to the appell square, without giving us time to put on pants and shoes. Machine guns were shooting from the watch towers. We arrived on the highly lit up area, where the mine workers' night shift was already lined up.

Camp leader Moll, with the machine gun in hand, screamed at a prisoner: "Where did you want to go?" The prisoner stuttered "Herr Camp Leader, I swear that I have nothing to do with the escape of the prisoner!" Moll, rather drunk: "You don't have to swear, just tell the truth!" and shot him down. Additional shots were fired. Six prisoners collapsed dead. Moll would have probably killed the whole night shift, if his assistant, Schmidt, had not pulled the weapon out of his hand.

We found out the reason for the nocturnal execution the next day. On the way to and from the camp to the Grube and back the prisoners, marching in rows of four, had to link their arms so that nobody could get out of line; several men on the outside carried a mining lamp in their right hands. On that night, one of the prisoners had hit the SS-guard in the face with the lamp. When he had fallen, the prisoner disappeared into the nearby forest. The second SS-guard could not follow him, since he had to guard the remaining prisoners.

We heard now, that the escaped prisoner was well-acquainted with this area, since this was where he grew up. Moll had apparently overstepped his authority when shooting seven prisoners, since executions were to be pronounced solely by the Reichsfuehrer SS-Heinrich Himmler. The camp leader seemed to regret his deed, because he was afterwards totally changed and even invited the firemen of the camp to a soccer game, in which he himself participated.

Several days later, Moll came to us in the sleeping barracks and asked whether the room was heated sufficiently, and if we knew already that all prisoners from now on would get a half liter of milk twice a week. We did not know this. Well, now I told you. We noticed that he was drunk and speaking out of being inebriated. Soon he returned to being the same old sadist. He used a ruse to lead thirty prisoners into certain death, like one attracts bees or flies. In 1944, he had us line up, and addressed us in a friendly manner, admitting that many prisoners were suffering from the cold climate. He was not able to send all of us into the Grube (mine), since it was already filled up.

But in the near future a new camp was to be opened in a southern area, where those who suffered from the cold could go. Those interested should register and have their names taken down. Thirty prisoners responded, the writer wrote down their names and numbers. Moll told those who stayed behind they should envy their comrades, who really were going to a warm climate, with the smoke onwards to the sun. The next day, the thirty comrades were picked up for the climactic change. No-one has ever heard from them again. That was Moll's last deed, before he was replaced. After he left the Fuerstengrube, his assistant Max Schmidt was named camp leader. The prisoners breathed more easily, since they considered him less unpredictable than his predecessor.

But it was soon evident that Schmidt did not have any experience for the camp management. He left the administration to his camp elder, who followed in Moll's footsteps. He pushed the prisoners to the point of exhaustion. He placed spies, and himself spied on prominent prisoners. He got friendly with a Polish teacher, and tempted him to flee the camp; he himself would help him as much as he could. In order not to be suspected to collaborate with a number of Polish prisoners, he informed the SS-camp management of the planned camp escape.

Thirteen Polish prisoners were ordered to perform clearing jobs in the nearby forest. One SS-man and a Polish kapo went along as guards. The camp elder was informed about the plans to escape. They did not have a chance to carry these plans out, since the thirteen were arrested on the way to the forest by a special SS-unit. They were taken to the Birkenau camp for interrogation. One week later they were brought back to the Fuerstengrube, in chains.

On this day, all workstation were occupied only until noon, because all prisoners were to be present at the execution, to discourage others from making escape plans. All prisoners were standing around the gallows, the only one missing was the camp elder, who was hiding in a corner. Teacher Wisznewski, with a rope around his neck, standing on a table, discovered him and yelled at him: "You just wait, you son of a whore, Poland will get even with you for your deed!" This camp elder was accused, after the war, to have committed war crimes. A court assessor, who interviewed me as a witness in a certain matter, told me that the defendant was very ill and the scheduled court hearing had to be postponed.

At about mid-1944 it became known that the selections for gassing had been stopped. Instead of selections for the gas chambers they were now isolating weak prisoners, supposedly to bring them back to their feet. They were given a vacation from work of two weeks, and the daily bread ration was to be doubled. Even the kapos participated in the improvements of conditions for weak prisoners; beating sticks which had usually been ready in their hands, they were now hiding under their jackets. Mistreatments had become rare. It looked as if also the SS-terror had come to an end. "But who could be sure whether a ruse was not behind it all, which camp leader Moll had once already used to lure the thirty prisoners to their death." The selected prisoners declined to take advantage of the better conditions, since they were almost sure that they would be tricked into the gas chamber.

The attentat on Hitler proved to us that he had enemies in his own ranks, who wanted to eliminate him; an end of the SS-reign seemed to be in sight. Even the SS-people were starting to reconsider; their loyalty to the Fuhrer was getting shaky. A large part of the German workers no longer believed in Dr. Goebbels' wonder weapon, which was supposed to bring the final victory. Once I overheard a conversation between two free German workers in the machine operation, which went like this: "Karl, do you still believe in the Fuhrer's final victory? Yes, why not? Well, I don't!"

Not every prisoner possessed the strength to wait for a liberation by the victorious powers. Many lost hope to be ever freed while still alive. My otherwise courageous block elder Grimm from Leipzig did not want to wait any longer for his death; he preferred the risk of a camp flight and started to search for ways and means to start escape preparations. Once, when he confided in me his intention, I tried to change his mind. That made it clear to him that I would not participate in an escape attempt. He was disappointed, and told his friends in my presence "look at this fool, he believes he will alive to be liberated." Grimm knew that he could depend on my silence. This topic was never discussed again between Grimm and me.

Grimm never let go of his idea to escape from the camp; he was determined to realize his plan. He persuaded three of his friends on the block to dig an escape tunnel underneath the block barracks, which was to end beyond the camp enclosure. But the three prisoners had to work during the day in the mine, and were therefore not available for the digging of the tunnel. Grimm found a solution: he persuaded the camp physician Dr. Goldstein to put the three prisoners on sickleave for a few days. Now they started the work underneath the block barracks. They encountered more and more difficulties, and the project had to be abandoned. The plan of escape was given up, the three prisoners reappeared in the mine to resume their work. The kapo in the Grube (mine) noticed that the prisoners, who were still on sickleave, had returned to work; he guessed that the physician had just given them some days off, and reported his suspicion to the camp elder, who reported this to the camp leader. A SS-special unit arrested the three prisoners, and also Dr. Goldstein, under suspicion of favoritism.

The accused were taken to the Birkenau camp, where they were interrogated by the SS Political Division. In the face of the evidence, they confessed to have worked on preparing an escape. Grimm was identified as being the originator of the plan, and also arrested. The beginnings of the digging were evidence enough.

The incident was reported to Reichsfuhrer Himmler, who condemned the five prisoners to death. The delinquents were then chained and returned to the Furstengrube. Again, a gallows was erected and a long table placed underneath it. On it the five prisoners were standing with the rope around their necks. A SS-officer read Himmler's verdict. Grimm looked at me with tears in his eyes. Who knows what he was thinking at this moment? Perhaps he regretted that he did not follow my advice. Before the table was pulled away from under the gallows, they were calling out to us "Farewell, comrades!"

I remembered Dr. Goldstein from the time of our arrest in Nice. He had been arrested on the same day as I, and brought to the Hotel Excelsior. Shortly thereafter his young wife appeared, a Frenchwoman of Christian confession. She begged for the freedom of her Jewish husband, but was put off cynically by the Germans. She was free to join him, she would get a free ride. After the end of the war, when I was again in Nice, I confirmed to Mrs. Goldstein the death of her husband, at the police station in the district where she lived.

A new block elder moved into Grimm's block. As his first official action, he ordered friend Leo and me to fill the ca. six meter long dugout under the block. The unrest, which had prevailed amongst the prisoner under the block elder Grimm gave way to a friendlier climate. The new block elder, although a criminal, showed humanitarian traits as block administrator. I cannot remember that he ever beat a prisoner without reason. He asked the block inmates to help each other instead of fighting each other.

Slowly we got used to camp life; there were some amongst the prisoners who wished to stay here for the rest of their lives, but those were the odd men out; the kapos which had come from German maximum security prisons, mainly the young SS-men, who were proud to wear the SS-uniform. Compared to them, the racially and politically persecuted felt like owner-less dogs.

The days, weeks and months passed by in the camps' monotonous way of life, on the same path as described for the prisoners. And yet, we never gave up hope that one day the bells of freedom would ring also for us. The first hopeful sign were already there. On quiet nights we were able to hear the thunder of the Russian canons, which sounded for the long-suffering prisoners, like uplifting music. Our courage to wait patiently increased. The depressed mood had given way to the hope of a near liberation. Some weeks prior to our liberation, the camp leaders had even organized concerts, which put some light into the darkness of our existence.

One of the free German workers secretly gave me a newspaper. I read in the Armed Forces report that the city of Gorlitz has been occupied by Russian troops. The closer the front approached, the closer also the moment of liberation or death, in any case an end of the uncertainty. When I arrived in the Furstengrube, there were about twelve hundred prisoners. By end-1944 they were reduced to less than half that number; the gas chambers had demanded their victims.

I asked a young SS-man who was guarding several prisoners outside of the machine operation place, if it could be true that the Russians were approaching via Gorlitz? He thought it was possible, since he had not received any mail from his parents, who lived in that area, for two weeks. Now it would not be long and we would change roles, he would have to don the prisoners outfit and I would guard him. I replied: After the end of this war, there will be no more hatred between the countries, and no more KZ-camps.

The SS-guards were now slowly transferred away from the camps and to the battle front; they were replaced by Armed Forces personnel, dressed in SS-uniforms, who were not able to fight on the front. As the Russian troops advanced more and more, the civil population was asked, on a Sunday, to dig shelter-ditches. Several caldrons full of food were prepared for the workers and transported by truck to the sites. The workers there, occupied with ditch digging, refused to accept this good food, and donated it to the prisoners. The sauerkraut and bacon returned untouched to the Furstengrube and was given to the prisoners. The workers had thereby unmistakably demonstrated their attitude.

However, there were still unteachable SS-men who considered the shooting of a prisoner as sport: once, when we marched back from the workplace to the camp, we were walking on the railway embankment since, during a rain, the road through the woods was impassible. One prisoner ahead of me turned his head repeatedly towards the forest near the railway embankment. The SS-man asked him why. He had heard the sound of his mother's voice, replied the young prisoner. Then he should go to her, said the guard. The prisoner took the words of the guard seriously, and tried to break out of the lineup. He had not yet taken one step toward the woods, when the guard's bullet hit him. The shot had been heard in the camp, and the camp leader appeared immediately on the scene, riding his motorcycle. The SS-man stated that he shot the prisoner during an attempted escape. Camp leader Schmidt praised him as a good marksman. I had the impression that the shot man had been mentally deranged.

Each day at noontime we were given the famous bran soup for lunch, and were allowed to pause for one hour. During this free time I sometimes talked with my engineer Dziubany, he was rather familiar with my past history. Once I described to him how wonderful life had been in Nice. I had planned, nevertheless, to give up Nice and move to London, but my girlfriend persuaded me to stay in Nice. We had not heard from one another since my deportation; she was surely expecting that my last station in life had been the gas chamber. Once I told the story to the engineer. He suggested, the next day, to give my girlfriend in Nice a sign of life. I could do this under his name, if I wrote the letter in a way that its origin could not be traced to a concentration camp, and not raise any suspicion. I wrote therefore to my girlfriend: Dear Maria, the Christmas holiday is fast approaching again, I will not be able to, unfortunately, to send you a Christmas present, since nothing is available without rationing coupons. If you, however, want to give me something for Christmas, then I can tell you that I would enjoy very much a leather jacket, which would be very useful on the bicycle in the wintertime. Greetings from my wife and two children, all wish you a Merry Christmas.

The addressee recognized immediately my handwriting, and had, therefore, a sign of life from me. She responded, via the engineer's address, that my cousin and his wife had been taken to a hospital. She had not been allowed to visit them so far, since they have been isolated due to a contagious disease. I gathered from this cryptic message that my cousin and cousin had been deported as well. My second letter to my friend was returned, marked with a note by the Armed Forces High Command "not admitted for transportation". Nevertheless I was glad that the sign of life exchange had been successful, and even without consequences, we believed. Shortly thereafter, a young officer from a SS special unit showed up in the locksmith shop with a German shepherd dog, placed himself on one side of the workshop, observed the engineer and me at work, but did not say anything. We feared he had come to question us in regard to the fake letter exchange. He left the workshop after ten minutes with the remark "komme wieder" (I'm coming back), but he did not return; we had misunderstood, he had called his dog, whose name was "Widder". This was the happy ending to a potentially life-threatening action.

Several days later, we were pleasantly surprised. SS-rapport leader Koch, a German from Romania, well-liked by the prisoners because of his friendliness, came and asked us whether we had already picked up our bread.; we said no, since we did not get our bread rations until we returned to the camp. A fully-loaded bread truck was being unloaded in the nearby woods, which the Hungarian Jews had brought along, said Koch; Leo was to accompany him and take as much bread as he was able to carry. Upon his return to the workshop he carried four loaves, three kilo each. We cut off a small piece, and hid the supply in the tool storage area, glad about the thought that we would be able to eat all we wanted in the days to come. Who can describe our surprise, when we found the storage area empty the next day. Russian prisoners had broken into the workshop during the nightshift and had taken all the bread.

For the second time, Christmas in the Furstengrube was not far away. These holidays united Jews and Christians in the camp: all prayed for the same: "Peace and Freedom". The kitchen had saved up for months, so that we would have a better meal on the holidays. This was discussed already on all work places. Prisoners who cleaned the kettles in the kitchen for an extra bowl of soup, spread the rumor that, for Christmas, we would have Hamburger Steaks with peeled potatoes.

On the first Christmas Day, tables and chairs were arranged outside; the food arrived: indeed Hamburger Steaks with peeled potatoes. Kitchen chef Hirschel brought in a second surprise: from the saved-up sugar of one whole year he had made candy. Each prisoner received a bag full as a present.

The holidays passed, the daily humdrum was resumed. The new construction in the Furstengrube was continued, even though it was no secret that Auschwitz had to be vacated due to the continuous advancing by the Russians. But the means to evacuate and transport many thousands of prisoners were non-existent. The roads were filled not only with retreating German troops, but masses of civilian population refugees. The SS-leadership was helpless, and planned a natural decimation of the still-alive prisoners, since there were no more gas chambers. All available means of transport which had been used primarily for the transport of Jews into the extermination camps, now had to be used for the returning German soldiers and civilian refugees. Therefore, the evacuated prisoners had to try to save their lives in day-long marches on foot.

Without previous announcement, the Furstengrube camp was vacated on January 30, 1945, at midnight. The camp elder advised those prisoners who would not be able to march the seventy kilometers to Gleiwitz, to stay behind. Those who did, were hoping to be free once the main group had left. But that proved to be false: the remaining prisoners were shot by an SS rest commando. It did not make much difference, since, during the march, everyone who fell behind in the marching formation by even one step, was shot down. I, myself, walked for hours with one wooden shoe on one foot, the other shoe in my hand. One was not allowed to stop for anything. In my row walked a Norwegian prisoner, whose foot had gotten sore while in motion. When his pain from the wound became unbearable, he stepped out of the row, opened up his shirt, and yelled at the SS-man: "Go ahead, shoot!" He was shot on the spot.

After a foot march of almost seventy kilometers, we arrived the next day in the Gleiwitz camp. This march has been entered as "death march" into the war history annals. Behind our formation, trucks were following us who picked up all the shot prisoners, including a SS-man who could not march anymore, and who had shot himself before our eyes on the street. Additional SS-guards followed the trek on bicycles and urged the prisoners to walk faster, so that they could stay on their bikes. The Gleiwitz camp had already been evacuated before our arrival. All windows and doors of the barracks were destroyed. Lights were nowhere. Dozens of prisoners lay dead in the courtyard, probably unable to march, like those left behind in the Furstengrube.

Several thousand KZ-inmates were now waiting to be transported by a waiting freight train with fifty open wagons; several closed wagons, behind the locomotives were reserved for the diseased or shot in transit prisoners. I entered a wagon in which I spotted several of the kapos known to me from the Furstengrube, since I felt more secure amongst familiar faces than those unknown. The wagon was filled to such capacity that one could hardly turn around. The kapos had, moreover, reserved one corner for themselves and lied down to sleep. Head kapo Wilhelm named me a wagon supervisor, with the order to keep the prisoners away from the kapos' sleep corner. The long train rolled along very slowly. Agonized by hunger and thirst, prisoners jumped off while the train was in motion. They were shot by armed Hitler-Youth, who were guarding the train embankments.

After a two days and two nights ride, the train stopped at a station. SS-men ordered us to throw out the dead onto the ramps. They took the appointed prisoners into the closed wagons. Two prisoners had become insane during the long ride. They embraced one of the dead and spoke Kadish, a prayer for the dead. They then became unconscious and died like many of the others in the transport train. We had the feeling as if we had gone halfway around the world during this one week. No food, no water, no sleep, who was able to endure this? That seemed to also have been the purpose of this long journey, to let the survivors die of hunger and thirst. The transport train was to bring us to Nordhausen. We went via Leipzig and Halle to Nordhausen-Dora, where captured Italians had built a subterranean factory for the V2- production, Hitler's last hope to win the war. The Italians had perished due to hunger and cold. We were supposed to take their places and complete the subterranean city.

The thirst was more difficult to bear than even hunger. When a young prisoner, during a stop, wanted to get some water from a faucet at the station, he was stopped by an SS-man. The young prisoner showed him an eating bowl, pointed to the faucet where he wanted to get the water. The SS-man pulled out his weapon and told the prisoner he would take care of the thirst right away. The prisoner kneeled in front of him, begged him not to shoot, he was only eighteen years old and wanted to live. All in vain. The prisoner was cut down with two pistol shots in front of my eyes.

In the wagons, we had neither food nor a possibility to sleep. Those who were not able to stand on their legs any longer, would collapse, and another prisoners would sit on top of him, which meant certain death for the one underneath.

We got lucky during a stop at a Czech train station. A locomotive engineer lifted up a full bucket of water into our wagon. In another train station I saw a clump of ice lying between the rails, and I asked the guard in front of our wagon to please pick it up and throw it into our wagon. The SS-man first looked cautiously around and then granted me my wish.

Five days later, the wagons had become half empty; the decimation purpose had been fulfilled. Now, finally, the survivors had enough room to sit down while sleeping.

The nocturnal dismounting in Nordhausen seemed to us like a redemption, because we had feared that they would drive us around until the last prisoner had died. We were housed in heated barracks and were given a warm meal, a bowl of well-cooked barley, after one week of fasting. We noticed the next morning that we were now in a normal labor camp, and were treated humanely. The work as miners was hard, but the living conditions seemed to be more tolerable than in the Furstengrube.

Camp leader Max Schmidt was given the small camp Turmalin, left behind by the Italians. One hundred and forty Furstengrube-prisoners moved in. Other comrades did not want to join us, because they feared our camp elder. I tried in vain to persuade attorney Dr. Spitz from Berlin to come with us; but he, as well, did not want to have to deal again with the camp elder. He was later killed during an air attack on the Nordhausen camp. The Turmalin camp was, in comparison with Nordhausen, very small. Here, too, subterranean areas for the housing of the threatened military defense industry had been built. We were to widen and complete a large tunnel. Influenza and the cold demanded more victims from amongst these new forced laborers; we found out that our predecessors, the Italians, had died here by the hundreds.

Stones and soil were loaded onto lorries in the shaft and were pulled out by a locomotive fired with coal. We had to push the lorries to the tunnel exit, since the loco was not allowed to enter the tunnel because of smoke poisoning danger. A switch-man was responsible for the coupling and uncoupling. I was relieved from working in the quarry and employed to perform the switching service during the night.

We always had the same SS-man to guard us. He had confidence in me, and I was allowed to leave the quarry by myself. During cold nights, he sent me into the woods to collect firewood; then we would build a fire and not only could warm up, but also bake potatoes, which the SS-man brought along. When he got too cold outside of the quarry, he went inside. Once, he had left his fur coat outside of the quarry, and sent me to fetch it. A kapo, present inside the quarry, asked him: "What would you do, if he leaves with it?" The answer was astonishing: "At ten minutes to twelve, he doesn't have to (do such a thing)!" This SS-man was a bachelor, a German from Bratislava. During a nocturnal conversation he remarked that the SS were ready to go bankrupt, no-one had faith any longer in the SS-leadership, nor in the Fuhrer. He was going to send for civilian clothing, in order to get out of the chaos and blend in as a civilian.

We stayed six weeks in Turmalin, then this camp also had to be evacuated due to the Russians' advance. We were told that we would be employed in Denmark for peat-digging, but nobody really believed that. We were aware that the SS-rule was nearing its end, but did not know what would happen to us before then.

During the night before the departure march, the remaining provisions were used for one more nourishing meal. The leftover barley and onions were to be boiled, but could not be, due to the lack of firewood. The wood which was hauled in from the forest was wet, and did not burn, which meant that we had to eat the barley and onions half-cooked, before leaving the camp. A short time later, every prisoner in the marching formation had diarrhea. The undigested food leaked out of the prisoners' pants. Traces of it could be seen for kilometers on the edge of the road.

Several hours later we were allowed to rest in a village near Magdeburg. The prisoner had a chance to wash up and remove the traces of the diarrhea. A cattle slaughter feast was just held at the village restaurant. The camp leader, SS-troop and camp eldest participated; the prisoners lied down to get some sleep on the hay in the barn. Some of us toyed with the idea to disappear and to hide somewhere in the village, including my friend Leo! I warned him urgently not to flee, because no-one in the village would have dared to help us.

We were not counted as we departed from the village, as had been done upon arrival. We did notice, however, that some of the prisoners known to us were absent, and Leo already regretted to have followed my advice. But the camp elder, too, had noticed the absenteeism, but gave order to depart nonetheless. The camp leader stayed behind in the restaurant. The camp leader and camp elder had no doubts that they would discover the missing prisoners, they both agreed on this. That was why the camp elder ordered the departure, without concern for the missing prisoners.

The camp leader caught up with us later on his motorcycle. The news got around quickly: "Nine prisoners had hidden in the hay in the barn, were discovered and killed!" Leo and I knew some of them, who had rather good work stations in the Furstengrube.

We reached the shores of the Elbe river, where a motorboat awaited us which was supposed to take us to Luebeck. Before we entered, each of us was given a cup of coffee; nearly all prisoners had taken along a container of some sort from Turmalin. Only one had not thought of that and left his row to borrow a cup from a comrade. He was shot because he had left his place in the row.. We traveled on the Elbe-boat to Luebeck. From the harbor we marched to Arnsboeck and took up quarters there in a large barn. During the night we heard cannons thunder from the direction of Hamburg, which shook the barn. This probably meant, that we would not be able to stay here for long, either. The next morning, the camp elder selected prisoners who were to work on the camp leader's family estate. We were sure that the Reichsfuhrer of the SS, Himmler, had given him the permit to do this. For us prisoners, this was as good as a life insurance policy, because the camp leader's parents would have done everything to protect the prisoners on their estate from annihilation, keeping in mind, no doubt, to protect their son from committing a serious war crime.

Those prisoners who were left behind in the barn, were used to do leveling projects on the road Hamburg-Luebeck. During that time, American prisoners of war were passing us by. I asked them for cigarettes; they threw many packs in the direction of the road ditch. We accepted them gladly, because cigarettes were welcome means of exchange for bread.

Evenings, the comrades who worked on the country estate returned to the barn. One of them who was called "the Japanese" because of his slit eyes, and whom I knew from the Furstengrube, knew that we who were left behind got nothing to eat, and one handed me a huge portion of fried potatoes, wrapped in newspaper, out of our old friendship. On this and on the next day I did not go hungry. That was important, since many of us in the barn were hardly able to stand up, weakened by hunger.

Behind the barn was a large compost heap, containing waste from the cows and horses in surrounding stables. When I, guarded by an SS-man, went there to relieve myself, I saw some of the prisoners kneeling in front of the compost heap, picking oat kernels from the horse waste, wiping them off on their coats and eating them. I asked my SS-guard: "Who will believe us if we tell them, after the war, what we saw here?" "Yes, it is incredible", was the answer.

The story was told at the country estate that the camp leader had been ordered to appear before Himmler with a list of the prisoner-inventory...On his way to Luebeck he stopped at the barn-camp. There, he found that the official barber of the SS was dead. Others were lying, covered up like a heap of corpses, on the floor. The camp leader asked me whether all of them had died. "Not yet, Herr Camp Leader!" Max Schmidt wanted to make sure, so that he could correct his prisoner inventory list.

The Furstengrube's electrician, who had repaired a radio at the country estate and listened to the German news brought by the British broadcasting service, brought good news. The city of Essen had been taken by British troops. I replied spontaneously "Now I don't need any more Essen (=food)". The man did not comprehend the play on words right away. "But of course." In Essen, the largest armament industry plant of the German Reich was located. Without Essen, the German war industry is what we prisoners are without essen (=food). Liberation will come any day now, as early as tomorrow or the day after.

I was right, it came two days later. But until then, we lived through some tense hours. At midnight, the whole SS-troop came into the barn where the prisoners were sleeping. There was no light. Kapo Wilhelm called out into the darkness "Everybody stay down on the floor! Nobody raises his head!" The "Japanese" next to me whispered "Now they'll finish us off!" I was aghast over this remark. Shut up, you damn Japanese! Full of fear I lifted my head up carefully to see what was happening. Kapo Wilhelm ran around, all upset, the SS left the barn. It really looked as if our end was near, even more so since kapo Wilhelm had ordered the German citizens to stand up. The last group to leave the sleeping quarters were the Jews and foreigners. We had to line up in front of the barn. One of the prisoners, whose friend was working in the camp elder's office, reported that we were to march to a farm about thirty minutes distance from the camp barn. There we would be taken over by the Swedish Red Cross and brought to freedom in Sweden. Once having arrived at the farm, we lied down in their barn and fell asleep. The "Japanese" awakened me and showed me a small sack filled with granulated sugar, which he had been able to snatch from a kapo, in the dark barn. We ate that for breakfast right away. At noontime the camp eldest called out: Frenchmen, Belgians and Dutchmen, line up immediately!" I whispered to the Japanese: "Come on, we are going to Sweden." He remarked, naively, he could not come along, since he did not belong to any of these countries. I took him by the arm and pulled him into the Red Cross truck.

The Swedish government had declared its willingness to take in Frenchmen, Belgians and Dutchmen, but it was sufficient if a prisoner was able to speak one of these languages, in order to enter Sweden. The "Japanese" who came from Cologne, and I from Nice, claimed this right for us.

The SS-men observed our liberation with mixed feelings, and transformed themselves suddenly into our friends. They put down their arms as a sign that the force (terror) had now come to an end. I shook hands warmly with an SS-man from Bonn, who had shared with me his sandwich a few days earlier. He was one of the battlefront-disabled army members, who had been hired to guard a prisoners camp, without knowing that he was scheduled to guard a concentration camp.

The Red Cross had prepared for our liberation already for several days. A minibus brought us to the Lubeck harbor, where a small freighter was waiting for us. A Red Cross nurse asked if we were very hungry. I showed her a turnip, which I had organized on the farm as emergency ration. "Throw that into the water!" she said. "You are getting a five-pound food package, which will be more than you can eat." On the freighter, we were given one of these packages, designed for two men. We did not even open it. I lied down on the freighter's deck and contemplated: "Is this now a dream or reality?" I could not believe that now I was free.

I later shared the food package with the Japanese. Butter, cheese, cookies and chocolate, but not one slice of bread, to put the butter and cheese on, in order to eat it.

We did not really comprehend the change from a life in hell to an existence in freedom until we went on land in Trelleborg, and found ourselves amidst cultivated people. We were taken to one of the most beautiful city resorts, where Red Cross volunteers were making every effort to pamper us. We were treated like babies, and felt as if reborn. We were dressed in new clothing, from head to foot, and began to leave the past behind us. The KZ rags were immediately burned. We also received a razor, brush and soap, and everything that a man needs in daily life.

Washed and shaven, we were driven back to the Trelleborger harbor's reception hall. There, a dinner had been prepared such as we had been without for years: a nutritious beef soup with noodles. Everyone went for seconds and more. I became ill while eating the third bowl of soup, since the stomach was no longer used to such a rich meal. An ambulance took me to an improvised hospital.

All former prisoners were examined in a hospital for contagious diseases, and then transferred to several South-Swedish resorts. We experienced this stay as being in an earthly paradise. The physicians put us on a strict diet of tea and zwieback (dry toasted cakes) for the first three days. In spite of good medical treatment and care, some additional former prisoners died. I wanted at first to do nothing but forget the worries and the past. But I did have one concern: to give my brothers Max and Leo in America a sign of life. They might possibly see me under a heap of corpses in a concentration camp, as such photos were being shown on screens all over the world. I had their addresses, but no money for a telegram.

The message to America was to cost eighteen Swedish crowns. I did not have the courage to turn to a welfare office for this; I preferred to borrow the money from a comrade or earn it by working. Once again, a coincidence helped me. When I went for a walk with two Furstengrube comrades, we passed by a greenhouse. "There are tomatoes growing in this greenhouse", I said. How did I know that? "I can smell it." My friends did not want to believe it. To prove it, I asked a man who stood near the entrance, and whom I took to be the owner. He confirmed by guess and asked us to enter into the greenhouse, where early tomatoes were ripening. The man wanted to know whether we belonged to the group of prisoners from Auschwitz. We talked with him about the concentration camp for half an hour. He was many of German-friendly Swedes, who could not comprehend that the Germans were going along with the massacre of a whole ethnic group.

We finally talked about the greenhouse. I told him that I had hidden in a gardening establishment and worked there, before my deportation. Whether I could work for him for two or three weeks? He offered me two Crowns as hourly wage. This would finance my telegram to America. I agreed, but only for a part-time job, since I was still under medical care.

After three days work I had earned enough money and hurried to the post office in order to send the telegram to Cleveland, Ohio. The text: Letter concerning my liberation is on the way. Please send me five hundred dollars to the bank in Trelleborg/Sweden."

Several days later the Trelleborg Bank informed me that five hundred dollars had arrived for me, and I should pick them up in person. The director of the bank, who spoke fluently German, wanted to hand me the amount immediately. I asked him to give it to me in Swedish crowns; he replied he had to first get a permit from the Swedish Imperial Bank. I had to sign an application, and the permit arrived shortly thereafter.

I encountered the bank director again during an evening concert in a park. He had asked for me since he intended to invite me to his home for dinner. I politely declined, since it was after dinner time, but he insisted that I accompany him, explaining that, after a promenade, I would have room for a snack and a good glass of wine. So, after the concert, I went with him. His family was already prepared for the visit. We were joined by two match-manufacturers and their wives. They wanted to know if the reports they had been reading in the Swedish newspapers about the murders in Auschwitz were really true. I had to confirm all the details. The conversation then turned to more pleasant topics, and I left around midnight, in the best of moods. After years of persecutions and humiliations I had felt, once again, to be a human being amongst human beings.

However, no-one must believe that I had already forgotten this horrible time. That is totally impossible, since the memories of the persecution have developed into an incurable illness. Only the six million Jews who have died in the German concentration camps had to forget about it.

The stay in Sweden was coming to an end. The Swedish government provided the most beautiful ship for the former KZ prisoners, to take us to France. All passengers traveled first class, In Le Havre we were welcomed like homecoming heroes. France was very generous: a large tent had been erected where we were presented with food and drink. Each of us also received one thousand francs pocket money. In Nice, once again I was received, and dined, first class, in the waiting room (of the train station?). Soon I was approached by relatives of deported persons, hoping to get a sign of life from me about their family members. Unfortunately, I had to disappoint all their expectations.

I also met again my friend Leo after my return to Nice. We had been separated in Sweden, since he had been taken, together with his son, to another area, and had been flown to Paris on a Red Cross charter flight, four weeks earlier. His brother Max was waiting for him in Nice, and met him and Gilbert there. Max had been able to spend the war years in hiding in Monte Carlo. Now the men were reunited, but the women, Leo's wife and daughter, were missing. They probably lost their lives in the gas chamber.

I, personally, wanted to first of all put all the problems on hold and regain my health. In 1946 I went from Nice to a sanatorium for rheumatic illnesses in Joachimsthal, seventeen kilometers distance from Carlsbad. I used the stay in Czechoslovakia to investigate, in Prague, what had happened to my safe in a large bank, where I had deposited valuables. I had locked up these valuables in 1938, before the Germans marched into the Sudetenland. Later, I was no longer permitted to enter. The Czech customs search had sealed the safe, and the Germans were prevented from confiscating the contents. Now I was able to receive the total number of valuables, gold and diamonds. They were the basis of my future existence.

Upon my return to Nice I found an invitation by my brothers, to visit them in the United States. I boarded the Polish vessel "Batory" in Cannes. The passengers were mostly Jews from Poland, Romania and Hungary, most of them former KZ-inmates, who wanted to visit New York City for rabbinic studies.

During the overseas journey, the Yom Kippur holiday took place. The vessel's captain put the ship library at the orthodox Jews' disposition for prayers. While all the orthodox Jews were in there to pray with their rabbi, I had a conversation on deck with a young French Jew. We overheard two young French women who were talking with a young man, who was on his way to Mexico to assume a position as cook, which was waiting for him there. He appeared to be annoyed because the library had been reserved all day. "When will the dirty Jews vacate the library, so that one can enter and play cards?" My travel companion confronted the young man right away, and warned him that he would not be allowed to enter America with a Nazi-mentality. The captain had been informed of this anti-semitic remark as well, and told the cook, he had to report the incident to the immigration authorities in the New York harbor, and that there was a danger that the permit to go on land would be denied to him.

The young Frenchman now regretted his remark and wanted to apologize for it. The captain sent him to us, but we told him we were not the right persons; he should address the "dirty Jews" in the prayer room. The captain himself arranged the mediation with the rabbi, informed him of the incident, and arranged a meeting between him and the culprit. The rabbi declared, after having heard the Frenchman's apology, that Jom Kippur is a day of forgiveness and reconciliation; in the name of the community in the prayer room he forgave him the expressed faux pas.

Now the rabbi wanted to know who had started "the ball rolling". The captain informed him and asked us to see the rabbi. "Are you Jews?" the rabbi inquired. We said yes. "Then I am astonished that I have not seen you last night or today in the prayer room." I explained that we were national Jews, but did not wish to belong to any religious group. The rabbi understood this, since many Jews had lost their beliefs after the happenings during the Hitler time.

My two brothers picked me up from the New York harbor, with lots of laughter and crying, because the joy of meeting again had to be dampened by the thought of other family members who probably had met with death in a gas chamber. My father had been able to flee to Lemberg, the Russian-occupied part of Poland, with my two sisters and their husbands and children. All of them except my father were force-evacuated to the Soviet Union's interior and survived the war there. Our father, however, stayed in Lemberg and fell, after the Germans marched in, into the SS' hands.

After a short stay in New York, I rode with my brother Max and his wife to Cleveland. He was expecting, at that time, the return of his son from the Japanese war scene; they were to meet him in San Francisco. I went with them, and was overwhelmed from the city on the Golden Gate and its beauty. I stayed three months in the United States, then I returned to Nice. I was now time, to contemplate the founding of a new career, which was to be launched again in Germany. The entry visas had at that time to be granted by the occupational forces. I started to correspond with the weaving mills of former times. One of them procured for the entry permit of the Allied Military Powers for the three western occupational zones.

Now I had to choose: Stuttgart or Frankfurt on the Main? Both cities had been important textile trade centers before the War. Frankfurt had the better location, from a traffic-geographical viewpoint, since it always had been an international trading center. I met there familiar faces from Leipzig, numerous fur traders, who re-established here the Leipziger Brehl, the once world-famous fur market center. And the city's authorities were very cooperative; each day, new enterprises were founded.

I established connections with my old suppliers. The procurement of goods was at first still difficult, since the lack of raw materials took time to alleviate. The textile industry, as I knew it from the past, did not yet exist again. Most weaving mills worked for countries abroad, only in this fashion were they able to obtain the necessary raw materials.

Only after I was sure of committed supply deliveries by my old suppliers, did I rent a small business area, centrally located, and founded according to the Leipzig pattern, a mail order business for linens. Since the demand for bed linens was great, my business flourished already shortly after being established. I used the old firm name from Leipzig. Now and then, former customers came from the Elbe river to the Main river and asked whether this was the linen firm Adler, which they knew from Leipzig. This was during the time when one was able to travel freely from the East Zone to the West.

The shadows from the past began to re-appear when Director Krumhof from the textile industry came to see me for the purpose of winning me over as a potent customer, as I had been for him during the time in Leipzig. He had employed the sales rep Riedel at that time, who later became notorious for the boycotting of Jews businesses in Leipzig, and who later still lead transports into the annihilation camps, as SS-leader.

During my conversation with Krumhof, I remembered a letter from my Leipzig book-keeper, which I received after the War's end in Nice. In it she reported that Riedel himself had told her that he would rather let a louse live than a Jew; and that he had shot, on the spot, a Jewish businessman, who had begged him for help during the transport to Auschwitz. After the war, he spread the rumor in Leipzig that he had been killed during the battle over the City Hall.

With this story in my memory, I now turned the conversation to the time before the war in Leipzig, and regretted the death of his former sales rep Riedel. Krumhof seemed to be surprised and corrected me: Riedel was alive and was active in West Germany in the textile field. I concluded from this information, that Riedel was again working for the Krumhof AG and finished our talk. Krumhof never knew the reason, and he also did not know that I was familiar with Riedel's past.

I did not report Riedel to the police, since a respected lawyer assured me that I would not be successful with such an endeavor. The accused would deny everything, and the witnesses were either dead or could not be found. Besides, this former SS-leader was not the only person suspected of being a murderer, who walked around freely. My own inquiries brought to light that Riedel was active in his career and working for Krumholz.

So what! My business was flourishing, and also my private life was finally in order, after such a long time of flight, concentration camp and liberation. The beautiful surroundings of Frankfurt with their numerous resorts, mountains and forests, helped much to towards my well-being. In this regard, I felt compensated for the loss of my residence in Leipzig.





<del>1</del> ABELLES Amélie	26.3. 86	Krankenwärterin	6371
<del>2</del> ABELLES Charles	17. 3.78	Makler	6370
<del>3</del> ABITBOL Emilie	30. 6.98	Ohne	5876
<del>4</del> ABITBOL Eugène	1. 5.24	Angestellter	5877
<del>5</del> ABITBOL Maurice	8. 3.88	Vertreter	5875
<del>6</del> ABITBOL Pierre	26. 4.26	Student	5878
7 ABOVICI Henri	14.12.84	Pelzarbeiter	6542
8 ABRAHAMS Henriette	13. 9.81	Ohne	7040
9 ABRAHAMS Markus	7. 7.75	Ohne	7038
10 ABRAVANEL Monique	17. 7.13	Ohne	6372
11 ABUSCH Charlotte	19. 4.06	Ohne	6048
12 ABUSCH Hermann	19. 7.11	Felle-Sortierer	6050
13 ABUSCH Leib	26. 7.03	Ohne	6047
14 ADDA Isaac	1.10.58	Beamter	5964
15 ADDA Henriette	27. 7.70	Ohne	5965
16 ADLER David	29. 9.98	Kaufmann	7020
17 ADLER Horst	10. 1.22	Arbeiter	6257
18 ADLER Malca	7. 8.73	Ohne	5944
19 AELION David	4. 5.78	Buchhalter	6201
20 AGHION Clémentine	10. 2.87	Ohne	6855
21 AGHION Ernest	21. 3.76	Hausbesitzer	6854
22 AKCHOTTE Victoria	28. 2.83	Ohne	5840
23 ALEKSANDROWSKY Paul	17. 8.79	Schneider	5910
24 ALEZSANDROVICZ Isidore	21. 2.25	Taschner	6549
25 ALGAVA Moise	20. 8.21	Zeichner	6204

